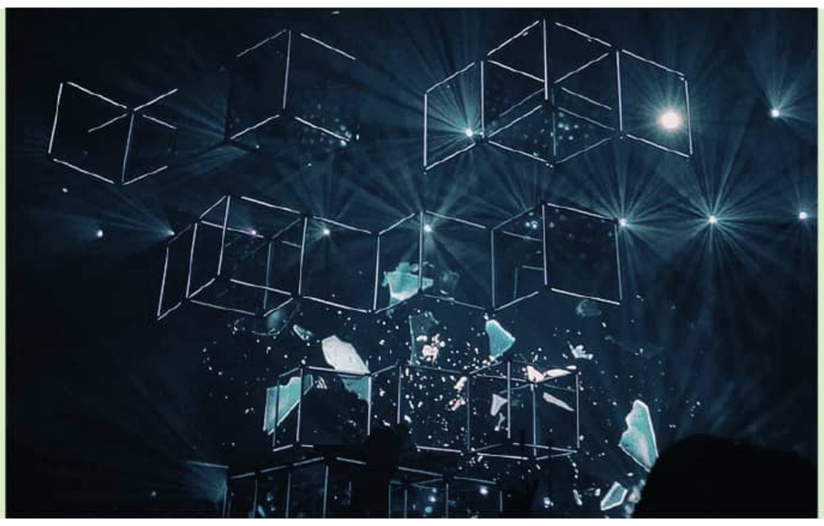
BENGALURU, SATURDAY, MARCH 21, 2026 www.Bangaloremirror.com 16 Pages PRICE ₹4

Bangalore Mirror

Happy Eid

ON SATURDAY

TEMP Max 31 | Min 18 | Humidity 36% Partly Sunny | Sensex 74,532 | Nifty 23,114 | Gold 1,44,587 | Silver 2,28,010 | Dollar 93.68 | Euro 108.28 | GBP 124.82



FRAUD PROOF

Bescom rolls out high-tech defence system to protect its digital network and personal data of millions of customers

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HELP ON ITS WAY

Centralised ambulance management system under unified emergency helpline number '112' to ensure more effective healthcare delivery

PAGE 6

13 foreign nationals arrested so far in narcotics cases in first 2 months of 2026; police say student and tourist visas are top two visas frequently misused for illegal activities

PEDDLE PUSHERS

1,282 cases under NDPS Act so far, 1,463 arrested

Sanjana CS
c-sanjana.s@timesofindia.com

TWEETS @BangaloreMIRROR

In the first two months of this year, Bengaluru police officials have registered 1,282 cases under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, during which 13 foreign nationals were arrested for their alleged involvement in drug-related activities. According to police officials, student and tourist visas are the top two visas that are frequently misused by foreign nationals for illegal activities, including drug peddling.

According to police data, 842 cases were reported in January and 440 cases in February. In connection with these cases, a total of 1,463 individuals have been arrested, including 13 foreign nationals allegedly involved in drug-related activities. Officials also stated that 272 of those arrested were vendors allegedly engaged in selling narcotic substances.

Investigations indicate that many of these vendors operate as part of organised supply networks functioning across several neighbourhoods in the city. Since 2023, authorities have registered 181 cases against foreign nationals involved in drug trafficking over the past three years, with a total of 235 foreigners arrested in connection with these offences.

"If any foreign national is found involved in drug peddling or overstaying without a valid visa, authorities seek court permission to expedite the deportation of such offenders and hand them over to FRO to hold them at detention centers until legal proceedings are cleared, after which they are deported —Seemanth Kumar Singh, Police Commissioner

Commissioner Seemanth Kumar Singh explained that some foreign nationals misuse student and tourist visas after entering the country by engaging in illegal activities such as drug peddling and trafficking. While there are also cases involving business and medical visas, these are fewer in comparison, he added.

According to police

CONTINUED ON PAGE 11 »

Conflict situation

5,000 cases of crop damage, cattle killed due to wildlife conflict at B'luru, nearby areas between April-Dec 2025

Garima Prasher
garima.prasher@timesofindia.com

TWEETS @BangaloreMIRROR

Bengaluru and nearby areas have recorded more than 5,000 cases of crop damage and cattle killed due to wildlife conflict in nine months, the Karnataka Forest Department has reported.

Between April and December 2025, while 4,738 cases of crop damage were recorded in Bengaluru circle, as many as 769 cattle were killed. Bengaluru circle encompasses Bangalore urban, Bangalore Rural, Ramanagara, Kolar, Chikkballapura, and Bannerghatta National Park.

Moreover, 39 cases of human deaths and permanent disability due to human-wildlife conflict were also reported from these areas.

Across Karnataka, 30, 099 cases of crop damage and 4,623 cases of cattle deaths due to wildlife conflict scenarios came up in the given period. To add to that, 352 human deaths and permanent disability were recorded.

Experts say a high number of conflict cases is because while the number of tigers and leopards has increased in the entire landscape, habitat fragmentation, food and water scarcity, and urban expansion lead to more conflict situations.

Long-term measures are the only solution to bring down conflict cases, thus reducing ex-gratia payments.

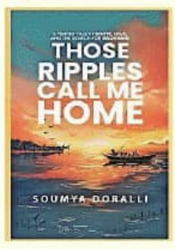
CONTINUED ON PAGE 11 »

THINGS TO DO

01 Artistic realm

The 9th edition of the Whitefield Art Collective (WAC) is being held under the theme 'Tomorrow, Altered!', featuring over 300 works across fine art, sculptures, installations, photography exhibitions, and curated artist showcases. **Where: VR Bengaluru, Whitefield Main Road; When: Until April 12**

02 Glimpse of rural life

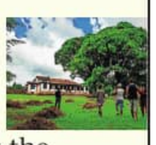


Atta Galatta is hosting the launch of 'Those Ripples Call Me Home', a lyrical portrait of rural life by Soumya Doralli. Set against the backdrop of the late twentieth century, the coming-of-age novel captures the ache, wonder, and inevitability of growing up. **Where: Atta Galatta, Indiranagar; When: March 22, 4 pm**

03 Colourful by nature

Kapila Nahender presents Pockets of Resistance, a new body of work that examines the subtle yet powerful ways in which nature continues to exist within the dense fabric of contemporary cities through a series of layered oil paintings. **Where: Venkatappa Art Gallery; When: Until Mar 29, 11 am to 6 pm**

04 Farm retreat



Hosachiguru Farm Showcase, a three-day event, brings the concept of farm and farmhouse living to urban audiences. Visitors can explore how managed farms can offer city residents a weekend retreat and a closer connection with nature. **Where: Hosachiguru Corporate Office, Jayanagar; When: Until March 22**

05 Lyrical voyage

'Tori Rang Rachi' by Santvani will be bridging the gap between ancient spiritual wisdom and modern existence through the evocative power of music, by bringing verses by renowned saint-poets to life through melody. The track list, to be performed by an all-women group, features major spiritual compositions. **Where: Cubbon Bandstand; When: March 22, 8 am**

KSRTC to focus on tech upgrade, fleet expansion

Amid rising accident claims, KSRTC set to implement compliant tracking devices, panic buttons and security cameras, while also adding 1,500 new buses to its fleet to ease crowding

Sanjana CS
c-sanjana.s@timesgroup.com
TWEETS @BangaloreMIRROR

With a service efficiency of 92.4 per cent, the Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC) is set to induct 1,500 new buses into its fleet. In addition, the corporation plans to roll out a Vehicle Tracking and Monitoring System (VTMS) with AIS-140 compliant tracking and panic buttons within the next four months. To further enhance commuter safety and accountability, KSRTC has also proposed installing dual surveillance cameras in 1,000 buses. The move reflects a growing focus on passenger welfare, especially in light of the rising number of compensation claims from dependents of passengers who lose their lives in KSRTC bus accidents.

File photo of KSRTC buses at Kempegowda Bus Station

Rise in accident claims

According to a KSRTC official, the financial compensation given to the dependents of the passengers who die in accidents of KSRTC buses has been increased from Rs 3 lakh to Rs 10 lakh. Meanwhile, the corporation has been witnessing a rise in claims from passengers seeking compensation in fatal accident cases. "In accident cases, there has been a rise in compensation claims from passengers. However, due to a lack of concrete evidence to accurately determine the sequence of events and establish fault, we often had no option but to provide compensation," said an Assistant Mechanical Engineer from the Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation.

New additions to fleet

In response to these challenges, and as part of its 2026–27 roadmap, KSRTC plans to induct 1,500 new buses to strengthen its fleet and enhance public transport connectivity across the state. KSRTC operates across 17 southern districts, covering 20,090 of the 21,748 villages amounting to 92.4 per cent regional connectivity. As of December 31, 2025, the corporation was running 8,261 schedules with a fleet of 8,766 buses, carrying an average of 34.81 lakh passengers daily, supported by a workforce of 34,236 employees. Officials said the induction of new buses aims to meet rising commuter demand, ease overcrowding, and improve service frequency, especially on high-density and long-distance routes. The addition of new buses is also expected to replace ageing vehicles, thereby enhancing reliability and overall passenger comfort.

Improved monitoring

Simultaneously, the department is in the process of implementing a Vehicle Tracking and Monitoring System (VTMS) with AIS-140 compliant tracking devices and panic buttons across all buses under the 'Central Assistance for Strengthening Public Transport' scheme. These emergency alert systems will allow passengers to immediately notify authorities in case of distress situations, enabling quicker response from control rooms and nearby enforcement agencies.

To further improve passenger safety, security, and operational transparency, KSRTC has also initiated a Bus Surveillance Camera Project, proposing the installation of cameras in 1,000 buses. Each bus will be fitted with two cameras, a saloon camera to monitor passenger activity inside the bus and a dashboard-facing camera to capture road conditions and driving events.

Explaining this, KSRTC officials said, "Beyond addressing accident-related claims, the system will help provide clear evidence in cases of theft or harassment, whether involving passengers or staff. The dashboard cameras will also allow us to monitor driver behaviour more effectively. Earlier, we received numerous complaints of drivers tampering with speed sensor wires or driving negligently, often ignoring potholes and road conditions. These measures will help bring accountability and transparency."

When questioned about safety, officials noted that prior to the implementation of the Shakti Yojana, women comprised about 35 per cent of passengers in 2022–23. This has now risen to 66 per cent in 2025–26, with more women availing free bus travel. They emphasised that ensuring passenger safety is therefore crucial, and added that the SOS and dual-camera system will help create a safer travel environment.

Cauvery connections made easier as summer arrives

The Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) has reintroduced its instalment-based payment scheme to make Cauvery water connections more accessible, allowing residents and businesses to pay 20 per cent upfront and the remaining 80 per cent in monthly instalments over a year. This time, the facility has been extended to commercial establishments as well, with the aim of reducing the city's heavy dependence on groundwater. The move follows a study by the Indian Institute of Science, which found that groundwater levels have declined in 65 wards across Bengaluru.

A BWSSB official said, "As part of broader summer preparedness, the board is also stepping up water supply measures, including faster approval of new connections, tanker support in high-density areas and improved distribution management." Officials said over 12,700 connections were approved in January and February alone, reflecting rising demand. BWSSB Chairman Dr Ram Prasath Manohar urged citizens to opt for Cauvery connections and support groundwater conservation, noting that the EMI scheme is especially aimed at easing the financial burden on households, apartments and commercial users. **— BMB**

Manipal Hospital Yeshwanthpur marks Kidney Day with major milestone

On World Kidney Day 2026, Manipal Hospital Yeshwanthpur celebrated a milestone in renal care, announcing over 500 successful kidney transplants, including more than 50 ABO-incompatible procedures. The hospital's achievement of 50+ ABO-incompatible kidney transplants represents a major step forward in expanding transplant access. Traditionally, transplants required matching blood groups, but ABO-incompatible surgeries now allow patients to receive kidneys even when blood types differ, reducing waiting times and widening access to life-saving treatment. The programme also featured transplant recipients sharing experiences, underscoring the role of timely care. **— BMB**

Traffic restrictions announced for Ramzan

In light of the Ramzan prayers on March 21, traffic police officials have announced restrictions across Pulakeshinagar, KG Halli, and Mysuru Road stretches.

Under Pulakeshinagar Traffic Police limits from 8 am to 12 pm, vehicular movement towards Millers Road, St John's Church Road, and Nandidurga Road will be restricted from Old Udaya TV Junction, Haines Road, and Nandidurga Road.

Vehicles from Old Udaya TV Junction can proceed via Bamboo Bazaar Junction, Netaji Road, Promenade Road, and Haines Road to reach St John's Church Road. Traffic from Haines Road can take Bamboo Bazaar Service Road, Cantonment Road, Queens Road, and Jayamahal Road.

Under KG Halli limits from 5 am to 2 pm, traffic movement from Nagawara Junction to Pottery Circle will be restricted. Vehicles heading towards Shivajinagar can go via Hennur Road, HBR 80 ft Road, Lingarajapuram Flyover, Robertson Road, and Haines Road. Traffic from Shivajinagar to Nagawara Junction can use Spencer Road, Coles Road, and Veerasandra Road. Parking is prohibited between Pottery Circle and Nagawara Junction temporarily.

On Mysuru Road, from 8 am until completion of prayers, traffic between Tollgate and Town Hall via BB Junction and BGS Flyover will be closed. Vehicles from Mysuru towards Town Hall can take West of Chord Road, Magadi Road, and Sirsi Circle. From Town Hall towards Mysuru, heavy vehicles can use Goods Shed Road, while light vehicles can proceed via Sirsi Junction, JJ Nagar, Binny Mill, and Magadi Road. **— BMB**

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BESCOM fights cyber scams with high tech war room

Rising cyber scams using BESCOM name push utility to launch advanced cyber security centre to protect consumer data and prevent financial fraud

| Sridhar Vivan
sridhar.vivan@timesofindia.com
TWEETS @sridharvMirror

As cyber fraudsters increasingly misuse the name of the Bangalore Electricity Supply Company (BESCOM) to trap unsuspecting consumers, the power utility is rolling out a high-tech defence system to protect its digital network and customer data.

The company is setting up a dedicated Cyber Security Operations Centre (CSOC), a round-the-clock command hub designed to detect, track and stop cyber attacks in real time. The move comes amid a spike in scams where fraudsters pose as BESCOM officials and send fake links or malicious mobile applications, claiming immediate bill payment is required.

In many reported cases, consumers receive messages warning of disconnection if dues are not cleared. These messages include links or APK files that appear official but are designed to steal banking details or personal information once installed. Officials say the new cyber command centre aims to tackle this issue and prevent further misuse.

An official said, "BESCOM is among the largest electricity utilities in the country, supplying power to eight districts in Karnataka and serving more than 20 million consumers. Its network includes nearly 9.83 lakh agricultural pump set connections, about 1.78 lakh industrial connections and over 91.47 lakh domestic connections. To manage such a vast system, the company collects sensitive details from consumers such as Aadhaar information, building details and address proof, all of which are stored in its digital databases."

> **"We have millions of consumers and their data security is extremely important. Our mobile application alone handles online payments worth crores of rupees**
> – Senior BESCOM Official

With the organisation rapidly shifting towards digital services, the risk of cyber intrusion has increased. Bill payments, customer requests and service updates are increasingly handled through mobile applications and online platforms. According to officials, crores of rupees worth of transactions now take place digitally through BESCOM systems every day.

The Central Electricity Authority has directed utilities to strengthen protection of digital infrastructure and customer data. Taking cue from this, BESCOM has decided to create a full-scale cyber monitoring system to safeguard operations.

The CSOC will operate from the company's headquarters in Bengaluru and rely on artificial intelligence and machine learning tools. These systems will continuously scan networks for suspicious activity and respond instantly to any threats detected. A senior official said safeguarding consumer information has become critical. "We have millions of consumers and their data security is extremely important. Our mobile application alone handles online payments worth crores of rupees. Protecting these financial transactions and our entire digital system is the main reason for setting up the cyber security centre," he said.

Officials added that the CSOC will monitor threats such as malware attacks, unauthorised access attempts and other risks, ensuring all digital services remain secure.

Long-awaited toilets ready to solve parking lot woes

Cab drivers and advocates won't face messy surprises anymore; two new toilet blocks in parking lot will solve years-long inconvenience

| Y Maheswara Reddy
c-y.reddy@timesofindia.com
TWEETS @BangaloreMIRROR

At last, the much-needed facility at Karnataka High Court parking lot is set to be in place in one or two months. The long-awaited addition includes two public toilet blocks at separate locations to cater to visitors, including transgenders and people with disabilities, who come to the parking lot either to meet advocates or attend court proceedings.

For years, those needing to attend nature's call had to enter the High Court complex or use public toilets in Cubbon Park. Many, especially cab drivers, resorted to urinating along the compound wall on the southern side of the parking lot due to lack of accessible facilities.

Bangalore Mirror had earlier reported the issue on January 26, 2024, highlighting how public urination was worsening the condition of the area. The report noted that little action had been taken to address the problem, beautify the area, or create awareness among those responsible for the growing yellow spot.

Bengaluru Solid Waste Management Limited has now taken up construction of two toilet blocks at an estimated cost of Rs 60 lakh. "Each toilet block will have four urinals and three commodes for men, three commodes for women. There will be an exclusive toilet for people with disabilities and one toilet for transgenders. We have availed the permission from the High Court authorities and the work is commenced and it will be completed as early as possible," said BSWML Assistant General Manager Bhimesh Naik. One toilet block is being constructed near the Karnataka Government Insurance Department building, while the other will be located near the food court within the parking lot.

Several people, including advocates, have welcomed the move, noting that such a facility was long overdue. "The authorities remained aloof after installing an e-toilet near the KGID building without bothering whether or not it is functioning. I hope the BSWML engineers will complete the construction of the toilet blocks without any delay and ensure proper maintenance of those toilets," said Prabhas N, an advocate.

Bangalore Mirror
A yellow spot is getting bigger and bigger day by day at the High Court parking lot and no one seems to care
DON'T LOOK NOW

Bangalore Mirror had earlier reported the issue on January 26, 2024

> **"Each toilet block will have four urinals and three commodes for men, three commodes for women. There will be an exclusive toilet for people with disabilities and one toilet for transgenders**
> – N Bhimesh Naik, BSWML, Assistant General Manager

Rudresh S, a cab driver, also welcomed the initiative, stating that lack of toilets had caused significant inconvenience. "With the High Court authorities allowing shifting of the food court to the parking lot, many people visit this place. The construction of two toilet blocks will be a great help for those who want to attend nature's call. It will avoid people urinating at vacant spaces in the parking lot," he said.

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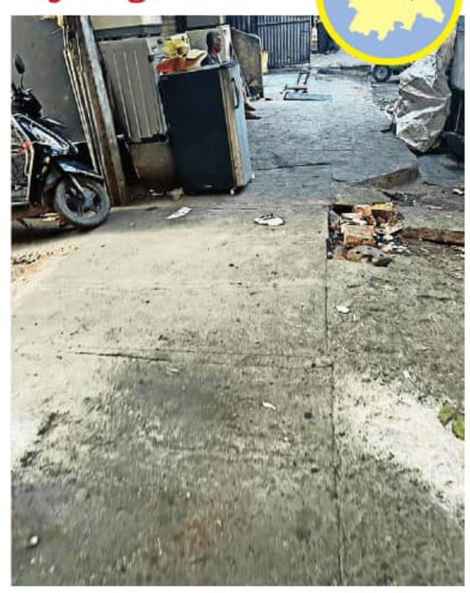
Garbage zone
BTM Layout

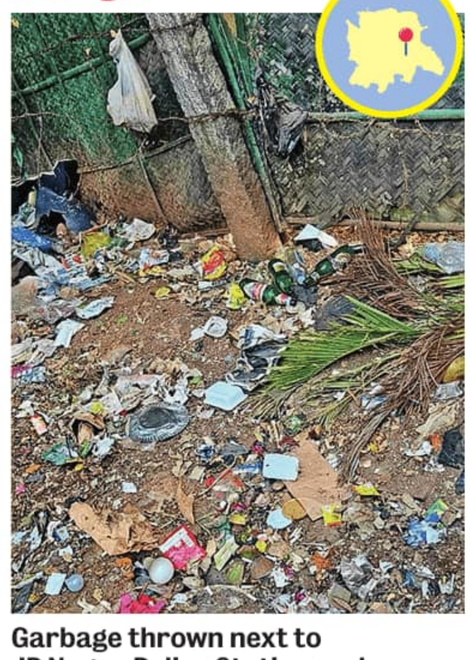
A heap of dry waste has remained unattended for over four months in BTM 4th Stage, 2nd Block, opposite a park, causing major inconvenience to local residents.

Neglected road
Jayanagar



Pothole-filled roads, encroached footpaths, and irregular garbage collection have created unsafe and unhygienic conditions on 31st B Cross, Tilaknagar, Jayanagar.

Trash mess
JP Nagar



Garbage thrown next to JP Nagar Police Station and a temple; no action despite repeated complaints.

CRIME FILES

Conman held for duping family of gold jewellery

Bengaluru police have arrested a man accused of duping a family and fleeing with gold jewellery in a case of deception.

According to the complaint, the accused posed as a conman and convinced the complainant's father that a shop inauguration ceremony required the presence of married women. Acting on this pretext, the father asked his wife to attend, and the two travelled by auto rickshaw from Prakashnagar towards Dr Rajkumar Road in Rajajinagar, eventually reaching KR Market.

During the ride, the accused allegedly persuaded the complainant's mother to remove her jewellery, citing safety concerns in the area. She handed over a gold ring and a gold mangalya chain, after which the man dropped her at KR Market and absconded.

The complainant, a resident of 9th Main Road, Prakashnagar, lodged a case at Rajajinagar Police Station on February 25, 2026. Following an intensive investigation, police apprehended the suspect near Kempegowda Bus Stand on March 5. During interrogation, he confessed to the crime and admitted involvement in multiple thefts across city. Between March 5 and 8, police recovered 116 grams of gold jewellery from shops in Bengaluru and 409 grams of silver articles from his residence on Hosur Road, valued at nearly Rs 15 lakh. —BMB

Man held for car theft, accomplices on the run

Bengaluru police have cracked a car theft case reported by a resident of Kannur Village in Bidarahalli. The complaint was lodged at Bagalur Police Station on March 3, following the theft of a vehicle parked near a friend's site on the night of February 26. The car, valued at Rs 8 lakh, was discovered missing the next morning.

Acting on credible information, police arrested a suspect near Dhorimanna Bus Stand in Barmer district, Rajasthan, on March 13. Investigations confirmed that he had stolen the vehicle, which was recovered the same day.

The accused was produced before the court on March 14 and remanded to three days' police custody. During interrogation, he admitted to committing the crime with two accomplices and revealed that a two-wheeler used in the offence was parked at his residence in Bande Hosur village.

Police seized the two-wheeler on March 15 and continued efforts to trace the absconding individuals. On March 16, the accused was presented before the court and subsequently remanded to judicial custody. —BMB

Man arrested for stealing two-wheelers

Bommanahalli Police Station has seized 10 stolen two-wheelers valued at Rs 5 lakh, following a complaint filed on February 16. The victim reported that his bike, parked on February 15 near the service road behind Rupena Agrahara bus stop, was missing the next morning.

Acting on gathered intelligence, police arrested a suspect near a hotel in BTM Layout on March 5, recovering one two-wheeler at the time. He was remanded to seven days' police custody.

During interrogation, the accused revealed that he had concealed several stolen vehicles in an open area near BTM Layout Lake, intending to sell them. Acting on this information, police recovered nine additional two-wheelers from the location on March 9.

Investigations have linked the accused to multiple theft cases: two each registered at Bommanahalli and Begur Police Stations, and one case each at Bandepalya, Hebbagodi, Girinagar, Parappana Agrahara, Kamakshipalya, and Sipcot Police Station in Tamil Nadu. —BMB

14 two-wheelers worth ₹10 lakh recovered

Whitefield Police have recovered 14 stolen two-wheelers valued at approximately Rs 10 lakh, following a complaint lodged on March 7 by a resident of Kalkere Main Road. The complainant reported that his bike, parked outside the ITPL back gate on March 6, was missing when he returned from work later that evening.

Based on credible information, police arrested a suspect in Sore Hunase Village. During interrogation, the accused admitted to stealing 14 two-wheelers from various locations. He further revealed that the stolen vehicles had been kept in an open space behind Shivakuntamma Temple.

Police have detected 8 theft cases within Whitefield Police Station limits and successfully recovered the vehicles. Efforts are underway to trace the owners of remaining two-wheelers. —BMB

Woman allegedly killed for rejecting proposal

A 32-year-old domestic worker was murdered in broad daylight in Gangondanahalli, under the Chandra Layout Police Station limits, on Thursday afternoon, allegedly by a man who had been harassing her for several months after she repeatedly rejected his advances, despite warnings from her family.

The deceased, identified as Firdous Banu, lived in a colony apartment in Aziz Shesh Industrial Area with her husband, an auto driver, and their children. She worked as a domestic help.

The accused, identified as Hafeez, had been persistently following Firdous and pressuring her to enter into a relationship. On the day of the incident, around 3.45 pm, Firdous was returning home when she was attacked near 1st Cross, behind a school in Gangondanahalli. Local residents stated that the accused stabbed her multiple times before fleeing the scene.

Her family rushed her to the hospital. However, she succumbed to her injuries during treatment. The Chandra Layout police have taken the accused into custody. Further investigation is underway. —BMB

Man arrested for stealing batteries

The Parappana Agrahara police have arrested a man involved in stealing UPS batteries and recovered 51 batteries along with an auto rickshaw used in the crime. The total value of the seized items is estimated at Rs 4 lakh.

The case came to light on February 5, 2026, after a manager of a private company in Electronic City filed a complaint. He reported that 10 UPS batteries, installed to support CCTV cameras, streetlights, and traffic signals in Electronic City Phase-2 and Shanthipura Main Road, had been stolen by unknown persons.

Following an investigation, police apprehended the accused on March 9 from a scrap shop in Vaddarapalya on Koppa Begur Main Road. During questioning, he confessed to the theft and admitted involvement in similar crimes across the city.

Police seized the stolen batteries and the vehicle from his shop. The accused was produced before a court on March 10 and remanded to judicial custody. Two cases have been solved. —BMB

Group booked for creating ruckus in metro

Bengaluru Metro authorities have lodged a complaint against a group of youngsters who allegedly created a nuisance by singing loudly inside a Namma Metro train on Sunday night. The incident came to light after a video of the act went viral on social media.

According to officials, the group of 11 individuals had reportedly attended a concert earlier and continued singing while travelling in the metro. Commuters were inconvenienced as the group sang loudly, with some of the girls even sitting on the floor of the coach.

Following the incident, Metro staff filed a complaint at the Peenya Police Station on Monday. Based on the complaint, the police have registered a Non-Cognisable Report (NCR) and initiated further action.

Authorities have reiterated that such behaviour disrupts public transport decorum and causes inconvenience to passengers. —BMB

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'Transfers and postings are not CMO's domain'

IN HIGH COURT

The Karnataka High Court has underscored that the Chief Minister's Office (CMO) should not directly handle requests for transfers and postings, making it clear that such matters fall within the exclusive domain of the concerned administrative departments.

"The highest authority of the State [CM] has better and more important work to perform than interfering with the transfers and postings of the employees of the State Government and its undertakings," the court observed, cautioning against the growing tendency to escalate routine service issues to the top executive office.

The observations were made by a division bench of Justice DK Singh and Justice TM Nadaf while disposing of an appeal filed by Chethan S, an assistant engineer with Bangalore Electricity Supply Company Ltd. He had challenged a September 9, 2024, order of a single judge, which had dismissed his plea against BESCOM's decision not to post him to a particular sub-division, despite an alleged approval from the Chief Minister.

While noting the existing transfer guidelines that provide for the Chief Minister's approval in certain situations—such as premature or delayed transfers—the court stressed that such provisions should not open the door for direct intervention.

It ultimately reaffirmed that transfer and posting decisions must be processed strictly through departmental channels.

Sexual assault case quashed over lack of evidence

The Karnataka High Court has quashed criminal proceedings in a sexual harassment case against a 30-year-old man, holding that the allegations were not supported by any material evidence and that the complainant, an adult, had participated in the interactions voluntarily.

According to the case, the complainant alleged that she had come into contact with the accused through social media, following which the two began communicating regularly. She claimed that the man had promised to marry her and, on that assurance, persuaded her during video calls to undress. It was further alleged that he had taken screenshots or recorded images of her during these calls and later used them to threaten or harass her.

Based on these allegations, a case was registered invoking provisions related to sexual harassment and criminal intimidation.

However, while examining the matter, the court noted serious gaps in the investigation. It found that the police had not seized the mobile phones of either party, nor had they collected electronic evidence that could substantiate the complainant's claims about the video calls or the alleged recordings.

The court also pointed out that there was no material to indicate the use of "criminal force" or any form of coercion. It emphasised that in the absence of evidence showing lack of consent or deception from the very beginning, the allegations could not sustain a criminal prosecution.

Given these deficiencies, the High Court concluded that continuing the proceedings would amount to an abuse of the process of law. It accordingly allowed the petition and quashed the case, reiterating that mere allegations, without corroborative evidence—particularly in cases involving digital interactions—are insufficient to proceed with criminal charges. —BMB

112 integration set to transform Karnataka emergency response

Centralised 112 system to manage entire ambulance network across State, ensuring quicker response, better vehicle tracking, improved patient care, faster coordination, and efficient emergency services

Sridhar Vivan
sridhar.vivan@timesofindia.com
TWEETS @sridharvMirror

The state government is set to implement a centralised ambulance management system under the unified emergency helpline number '112'. Medical Education and Skill Development Minister Dr Sharanprakash Patil said the system is expected to become fully operational within three months, with technical integration currently in progress.

The government will directly take over centralised management of all state ambulances under the '112' platform to ensure faster and more effective emergency healthcare delivery across Karnataka.

Bengaluru has 82 vehicles

Bengaluru has 82 ambulances deployed across its urban emergency network, making it one of the largest concentrations of emergency medical vehicles in the state, even as Karnataka operates a total of 1,715 ambulances. Sharing data in the Legislative Assembly, the minister said Bengaluru district has 71 ambulances under the 108 Arogya Kavacha service and 11 under the state ambulance fleet, taking the total to 82. In the neighbouring Bengaluru Rural district, 16 ambulances operate under the 108 service and 14 under the state network, taking the total to 30 ambulances.

Strong ambulance network ensures coverage across urban and rural areas

Across Karnataka, 715 ambulances operate under the 108 Arogya Kavacha emergency service, while 1,000 ambulances function under the state-run ambulance system, taking the combined total to 1,715 vehicles providing emergency medical response.

The minister said the fleet size is significantly higher than the requirement under National Health Mission guidelines, which recommend one Advanced Life Support ambulance for every five lakh population and one Basic Life Support ambulance for every one lakh population. Based on population estimates, the state requires around 820 ambulances.

However, with 1,715 ambulances currently operational, the state has 895 more vehicles than the prescribed norm, indicating no shortage of ambulances, the minister said. These ambulances are stationed across community health centres, taluk hospitals, district hospitals and primary health centres in remote areas, ensuring services reach patients quickly.

Data shared in the Assembly also shows that districts such as Belagavi, Tumakuru and Mysuru have some of the highest numbers of 108 emergency ambulances, while Belagavi leads the state ambulance network, followed by Bidar and Bagalkot.

Data shared in the Assembly also shows that districts such as Belagavi (56), Tumakuru (35) and Mysuru (33) have 108 emergency ambulances, while Belagavi leads the state ambulance network with 65 vehicles, followed by Bidar (52) and Bagalkot (51).

Rao said, "The government also plans to integrate both the 108 Arogya Kavacha fleet and the state ambulance network under a centralised Command and Control Centre, as announced in the 2025-26 state budget. Under this system, all emergency vehicles will be managed through a single platform to improve coordination and response time." The minister added that unserviceable ambulances under the 108 scheme will be replaced, while steps are being taken to ensure proper maintenance and uninterrupted emergency services across Karnataka.

Human wildlife conflict victims seek cashless treatment

Demand grows for cashless treatment system as wildlife conflict victims struggle with upfront medical costs and delayed compensation

With increasing incidents of human-wildlife conflicts leading to injuries, conservationists have raised the need for a cashless medical treatment facility for victims. In a letter to the state forest department, wildlife conservationist Giridhar Kulkarni has requested such a system for persons injured in wild animal attacks across the state. The request follows a surge in conflicts due to growing human-wildlife interactions in forest areas, buffer zones, agricultural fields near forests, and semi-urban landscapes.

Kulkarni highlighted that many victims belong to economically vulnerable rural communities dependent on daily wages, agriculture, or forest-based livelihoods. In several cases, arranging funds for emergency treatment causes hardship and delays in critical care. At times, forest officials and frontline staff have contributed money on humanitarian grounds to ensure urgent care. While victims can claim ex gratia under existing mechanisms, compensation is usually processed only after treatment. The immediate challenge remains arranging upfront payments for hospitalisation,

Cashless system may reduce hostility towards wildlife among communities

surgery, intensive care, and medicines, placing additional stress on already vulnerable families.

Thus, a formal cashless treatment system would be a humane and forward-looking policy aligned with conservation and social justice. "The financial and emotional distress borne by families affected by wild animal attacks not only aggravates human suffering but can also fuel animosity towards wildlife and undermine community support for conservation efforts. Establishing a cashless, streamlined emergency medical care facility for such victims would signal a compassionate and forward-looking policy that aligns wildlife conservation with human welfare," said Kulkarni.

Experts cite the state government's recent approval for cashless treatment of all snakebite victims under integrated health schemes. The reform also provides revised package rates for ward care, High Dependency Unit care, and Intensive Care Unit care in empanelled hospitals, both government and private.

According to Kulkarni, such a proactive measure would provide immediate relief to affected families during moments of crisis, build public trust in forest department efforts, reduce hostility towards wildlife, and strengthen conflict mitigation. "The department should consider establishing a round-the-clock emergency coordination mechanism at division and district levels to facilitate rapid communication between forest officials, ambulance services, and empanelled hospitals. A 24×7 nodal contact mechanism should also be established in each territorial division and protected area to coordinate between hospitals and the department during emergencies," added Kulkarni. — BMB

> **"A 24×7 nodal contact mechanism should also be established in each territorial division and protected area to coordinate between hospitals and the department during emergencies**
> – N Giridhar Kulkarni, Wildlife Conservationist

New rules target parking chaos, vendor encroachment

Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar on Friday said discussions were held with Bengaluru legislators on a footpath and parking policy to address pedestrian issues and reduce traffic congestion. Warning that vehicles parked in no-parking areas will be towed away, he said officials were directed to act against illegal flexes and ensure street vendors do not occupy footpaths and arterial roads. Shivakumar, also in charge of Bengaluru Development, had called a meeting of MLAs under the Greater Bengaluru Authority to discuss the budget and key decisions. "All five corporations under GBA have prepared their own budget proposals, and the MLAs have demanded ward-wise grants," Shivakumar said.

"Designated spots will be fixed for vendors, to clear the footpaths for pedestrians. Vendors should do their business only at designated spots; we will remove them if they occupy other places. We will announce the locations and roads," he added. Vendors will not be allowed on arterial roads, he said, goods left be seized. — PTI

Tender floated for Bengaluru's second airport plan

Karnataka Infrastructure Minister M B Patil on Friday said the government has floated a tender to prepare a detailed feasibility and strategy report for a proposed second international airport near Bengaluru.

He said officials of the Airports Authority of India have conducted site inspections of three shortlisted locations on the city's outskirts and flagged several challenges. Taking to social media platform X, the minister said a tender has been floated for the feasibility report. Three to four firms have participated in the bidding process. Further decisions will be taken based on the reports submitted by these firms, he added. "After selecting three sites, we called the AAI, and their officials visited all three locations. They pointed out the challenges at each site. To overcome and address those issues, we have called for a tender," he said. The state government had shortlisted two sites on Kanakapura Road and one on Kunigal Road. "Once the report comes, we will move forward and examine viability," Patil added. — PTI

10-lane highway set to transform north Bengaluru

The National Highway-44 stretch connecting Bengaluru and Hyderabad is set for a major upgrade, with plans to expand nearly 90 km into a 10-lane corridor at an estimated cost of ₹2,580 crore. The expansion will run from Devanahalli through Chikkaballapur to Kodikonda on the Andhra Pradesh border, improving connectivity between Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh.

Work is expected to begin near Kannamangala Gate in Devanahalli, with the corridor linking to the Satellite Town Ring Road and later merging with the Bengaluru–Kadapa–Vijayawada Expressway under the Bharatmala project. The upgrade is expected to cut travel time between Bengaluru and Vijayawada from 11–12 hours to about 6–7 hours, while reducing congestion by enabling smoother bypass routes.

"Beyond mobility, the project is poised to transform the real estate landscape across Devanahalli and Chikkaballapur, with improved connectivity driving demand for residential projects, industrial parks, logistics hubs and educational institutions.

As infrastructure strengthens, the corridor is likely to emerge as a high-growth investment zone, accelerating urban expansion and boosting property values across North Bengaluru," said Nagesh Gowda, a realtor. **BMB**

Modern homes embracing nature, not crowding

As cities grow denser and lifestyles become more stressful, homebuyers increasingly seek residential environments offering space, privacy, and stronger connection with nature. This shift drives interest in low-density living, a design approach prioritising openness and well-being over maximising built-up space. Low-density living refers to developments with fewer housing units per acre, larger plot sizes, and greater distance between homes. Unlike conventional urban developments aiming to optimise every square foot, low-density communities focus on balanced environments where residents experience light, ventilation, and privacy.

This model rests on four key pillars: design, well-being, technology, and sustainability. Thoughtful design ensures harmony between form and function, while green spaces and natural light promote healthier lifestyles. Smart home systems and integrated security enhance comfort and safety, allowing residents modern convenience within peaceful settings. **—Times Property**

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Bengaluru leads India's office realty growth surge

India's office real estate market is entering a high-growth phase, with total stock set to cross 1 billion sq. ft., driven by strong demand from cities like Bengaluru. According to CBRE's India Office Market Outlook 2026, nearly 65–68% of upcoming supply in 2026–27 will be in integrated tech parks, reflecting a shift towards premium, amenity-rich developments.

The market recorded a landmark year in 2025, with leasing at 83.1 million sq. ft. and supply at 58.9 million sq ft Green-certified buildings accounted for 87% of completions, highlighting the growing focus on sustainability. Global Capability Centres (GCCs) continue to drive demand, accounting for 39% of leasing and expanding rapidly in R&D and high-value functions.

Bengaluru remains central to this growth, emerging as a top destination for GCC expansion and premium office demand.

Along with Hyderabad and Delhi-NCR, the city accounted for a major share of GCC leasing, supported by its strong talent pool and mature tech ecosystem.

With nearly 45% of upcoming supply expected to be Grade A+ and about 65% of GCC occupiers planning expansion by 2027, Bengaluru is set to see rising demand for AI-ready, tech-enabled, and wellness-focused workspaces. **BMB**

Warehousing boom puts Bengaluru in fast lane

Bengaluru's warehousing market surged in 2025, with leasing volumes rising 24% YoY to 8.2 million sq ft, driven by strong demand from manufacturing, e-commerce, and retail occupiers, according to Knight Frank India.

Grade A warehouses dominated with 82% of transactions as occupiers preferred scalable, compliant, and future-ready spaces, while rentals increased 3% to Rs 23.2 per sq ft per month.

Manufacturing led demand with 39%, e-commerce grew sharply at 186%, and retail accounted for 16%, reflecting a diversified industrial base. Hoskote-Narsapura emerged as the leading cluster with 54% of leases, supported by strong connectivity, industrial ecosystems, and large land parcels.

Peripheral corridors such as Devanahalli-Doddaballapur also gained traction. With infrastructure upgrades, rising consumption, and expansion by occupiers, Bengaluru continues to strengthen its position as a dynamic logistics hub.

Weighted average prices highlight key growth zones. Devanahalli commands Grade A rents of Rs 30–45 per sq ft per month, while Bommasandra-Jigani ranges between Rs 26–42. Land rates in Attibele-Bommasandra range from Rs 40–200 million per acre, reflecting strong investor interest and strategic appeal. **BMB**

Outdated commute systems trouble India's GCCs

A new report by Routematic in partnership with Research NXT has revealed that nearly 60 pc of Global Capability Centres (GCCs) in India still operate without fully integrated transport systems, relying on manual or fragmented processes despite rising expectations around employee experience, safety and ESG goals. Based on a survey of 100 professionals and industry interviews, the study highlights a clear maturity gap, with employee experience emerging as the top priority (35 pc), overtaking safety, compliance and cost.

Company-provided cabs remain the dominant mode at 46 pc, while hybrid work has added complexity, with 36 pc of firms reporting fluctuating demand. The report also flags key challenges such as vendor performance, budget constraints and employee dissatisfaction.

It notes that most organisations still lack predictive, data-driven commute systems and calls for a shift towards AI-led, integrated mobility solutions to improve efficiency, compliance and sustainability. **BMB**

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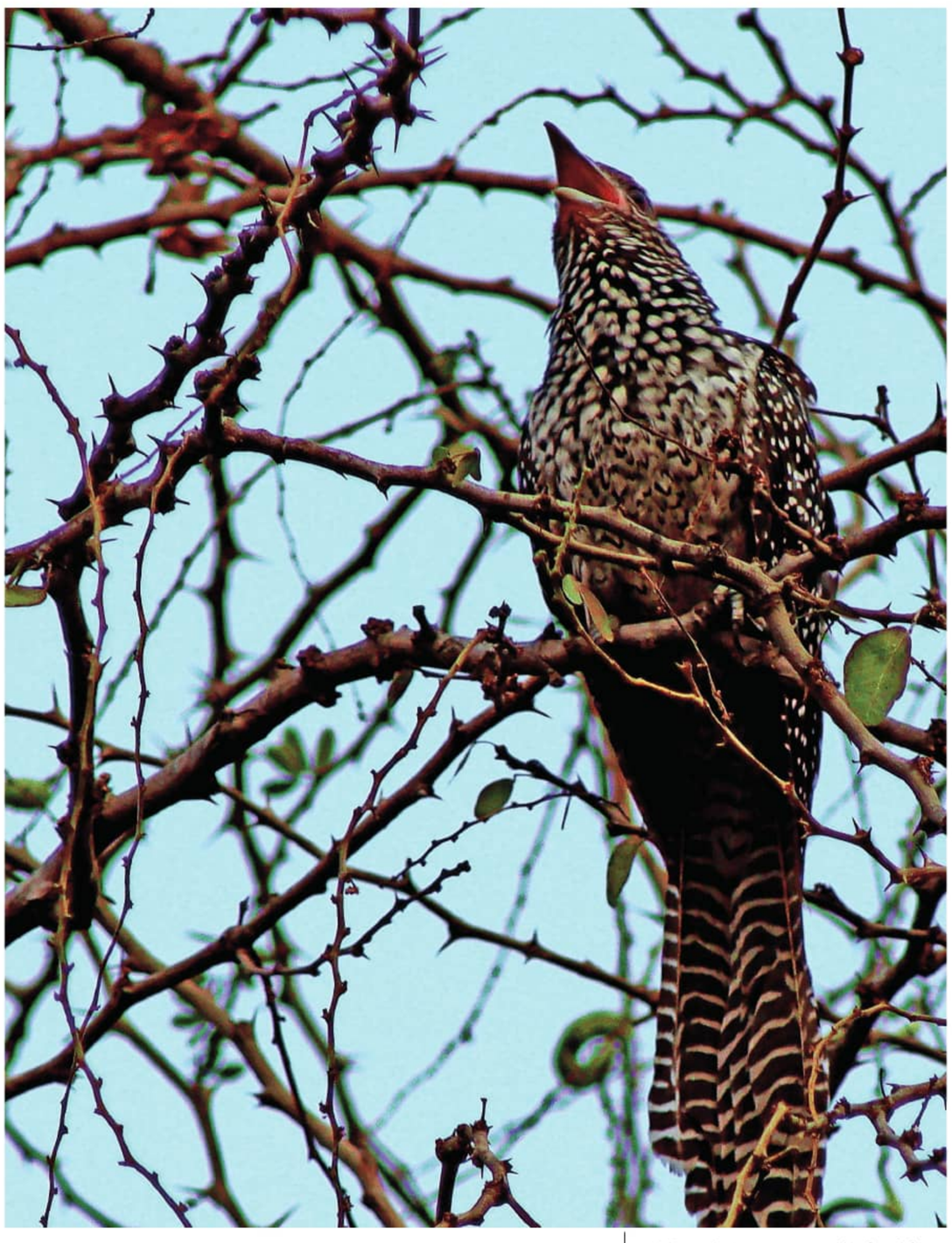
BENGALURU SPEAKS

and gets heard on this page

STORY BEHIND THE PHOTO



KOEL CALL A female Asian koel calls out at Sarakki Lake, its fruit-based diet aiding vital seed dispersal and supporting plant diversity

The picture was clicked by BM reader **Sridhar Comaravalli**

If you have a picture and a story to share, send us the picture with your name and number at **mybangaloremirror@timesofindia.com**

DID YOU KNOW?

The Earth is under assault, with space rocks constantly hurtling towards us, striking the atmosphere and often exploding into fireballs. Most pose no threat, as they are pulverised into dust during their journey. A fireball recently streaked across the sky near Cleveland, believed to be caused by a space rock nearly 6 feet (1.8 metres) wide and weighing 7 tonnes. It was seen from Wisconsin to Maryland, according to the American Meteor Society. The object travelled over 34 miles (55 kilometres) before breaking apart.

What's the difference between a meteor and an asteroid?

Asteroids are rocky remnants from the solar system's formation 4.6 billion years ago. Meteoroids are smaller fragments, while meteors are streaks of light produced when they burn up in the atmosphere. Brighter meteors are called fireballs, and any fragment that reaches the ground is a meteorite.

How common are meteors and fireballs?

Such events are frequent. Thousands of fireballs occur daily, though most go unnoticed over oceans or in daylight. Meteoroids travel at extreme speeds, compressing air ahead of them, generating intense heat that causes them to melt and disintegrate before impact. — AP

GET HEARD WITH MIRROR

9591233247

Let's see how much you know about Namma Bengaluru, folks. Tell us something incredible and mind-boggling about this beautiful city and our editors and researchers will check it out. If it's credible, we'll give it a shout-out, with your name and picture.

No bad air days: city's skies turn friendly

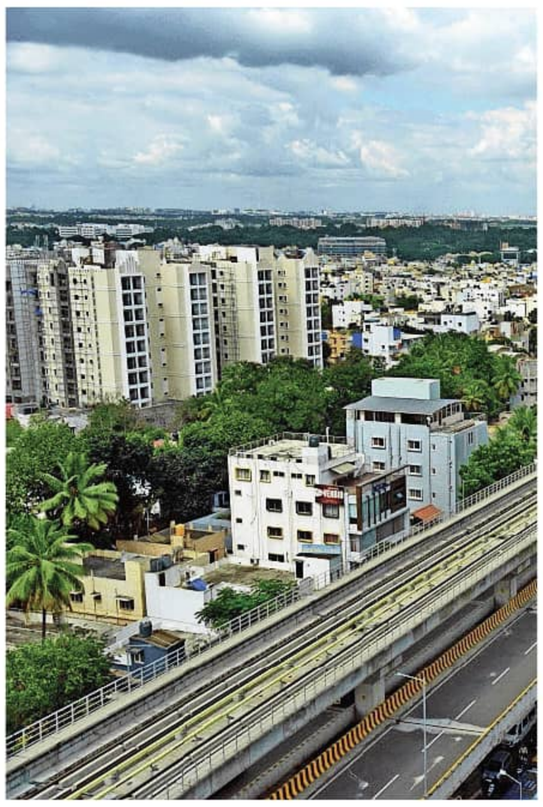
Cleaner winds sweep B'luru as dust settles, key zones flagged, action plans drive sustained environmental recovery efforts

Air quality in Bengaluru has improved by 21.7 per cent in recent years, with a notable decline in particulate pollution, according to data presented in Parliament. The information was shared by Minister of State for Environment, Forest and Climate Change Kirti Vardhan Singh in a written reply in the Lok Sabha.

The minister said Bengaluru is classified as a non-attainment city under the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP), which targets cities failing to meet prescribed air quality standards. A city action plan focuses on major pollution sources such as road dust, construction activity, traffic congestion and urban hotspots.

According to the reply, PM10 levels dropped to 72 micrograms per cubic metre in 2024–25 from 92 micrograms per cubic metre in 2017–18, marking a 21.7 per cent reduction. The city has also not recorded any "bad air quality" days (AQI above 201) in the past three years, indicating gradual improvement.

Nine high-emission zones have been identified for targeted action. Measures include dust control, greening drives, improved traffic management, and deployment of mechanical road-sweeping machines. An action plan for 2025–26 is in place to sustain progress. Monitoring is overseen by a city-level committee headed by the Deputy Commissioner, alongside a state-level panel led by the Urban Development Department.



The Centre has allocated ₹541.1 crore under the Fifteenth Finance Commission's Million Plus City Challenge Fund, with ₹427.43 crore (about 79 per cent) already utilised, as per data on the PRANA portal.

Key interventions include upgrading over 212 km of roads, expanding green cover

Parliament data reveals falling PM10 levels, crores utilised, electric buses deployed, monitoring strengthened through stations, committees, and citizen reporting systems

across 1.25 lakh square metres, clearing 2.72 lakh tonnes of construction waste, and deploying 127 electric buses. Authorities have also eased congestion at 20 major junctions, installed dust-control fountains, and set up EV charging stations.

Air quality is tracked through 26 monitoring stations, including 11 continuous stations operated by the Karnataka State Pollution Control Board, with real-time data available via the SAMEER app and central pollution portal. — BMB

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Trump spins Carter's report, fueling heated debate over mail-in ballots

Claim: Donald Trump says Jimmy Carter opposed mail-in voting, calling it "inherently dishonest" and prone to fraud.
Fact: Misleading. Carter supported mail-in and absentee voting. A 2005 report he co-chaired flagged potential risks but did not oppose such ballots and instead suggested safeguards. There is no evidence of widespread fraud.

The Donald Trump administration is invoking a 20-year-old report to misrepresent former President Jimmy Carter's views on mail-in and absentee ballots while promoting federal legislation that would impose stricter proof-of-citizenship and photo ID requirements ahead of the midterm elections. On consecutive days this week, President Trump and White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt cited the 2005 report by the Commission on Federal Election Reform while advocating for the Safeguard American Voter Eligibility, or SAVE America Act. The commission was co-chaired by Carter, a Democrat, and former Secretary of State James Baker, who served under three Republican presidents. Trump and Leavitt claimed that Carter opposed mail-in voting due to fraud concerns. However, this interpretation misrepresents the report's findings.

At a Republican conference, Trump said Carter believed mail-in ballots "should not be allowed because they are inherently dishonest". Leavitt echoed this, quoting the report's statement that absentee ballots are a major potential source of voter fraud. However, the broader context tells a different story. Carter supported mail-in and absentee voting, according to his own statements, his grandson Jason Carter, and The Carter Center. The 2005 report acknowledged potential risks but did not oppose such voting methods. Instead, it recommended safeguards and further study. Jason Carter stated that his grandfather supported mail-in voting and even used it himself. He warned that misrepresenting these views undermines public confidence in elections. Carter himself endorsed expanded vote-by-mail in 2020, urging leaders to protect democratic participation during the COVID-19 pandemic. He later reaffirmed his approval of absentee ballots, noting he had used them for years.

Mail-in voting remains widely used. In the 2024 election, about 30% of voters cast ballots by mail, according to federal data. This marked an increase from pre-pandemic levels. Notably, several states with higher mail voting rates are led by Republicans. Trump himself has voted by mail in Florida.

The 2005 report, titled "Building Confidence in US Elections", did highlight that absentee ballots could present fraud risks. However, it also emphasised measures to reduce those risks, such as limiting who handles ballots and improving safeguards. It did not recommend eliminating mail-in voting.

Experts consistently say there is no evidence of widespread fraud linked to mail voting, either in the past or present. Election systems have also improved, with better tracking, verification and security measures. Overall, claims that Carter opposed mail-in voting are inaccurate and omit key context from both his views and the report. — AP

Bidar university faces heat over ₹7 crore NPA payout

Audit exposes alleged illegal allowance payments to 238 staff, missing approvals, and conflicting claims by officials at Bidar veterinary university administration

Y Maheswara Reddy
c-y.reddy@timesofindia.com
TWEETS @BangaloreMIRROR

KVAFSU campus in Bidar, under fire as audit flags irregular ₹7 crore NPA disbursal lacking mandatory approvals and verification records

State audit uncovers suspected misuse of crores in non-practicing allowance at Bidar veterinary university, with disputed approvals, missing records, and officials contradicting each other

It is quite astonishing to come across brazen misuse of funds at Karnataka Veterinary, Animal and Fisheries Sciences University, Bidar in the disguise of non-practicing allowance (NPA) for teaching staff.

It is alleged that some individuals, including those who were recently raided by the Karnataka Lokayukta, have been collecting money from teaching staff while promising that they would be made eligible to avail the NPA benefit. The issue has come to light following an audit conducted by the Karnataka State Audit and Accounts Department, which flagged serious irregularities in the disbursement of the allowance during the academic year 2023–24.

According to the audit report signed by the Additional Director, the university disbursed NPA amounting to ₹7,08,13,477 to 238 teaching staff members. The report noted that the allowance is meant only for clinical posts that are full-time in nature, have scope for private practice, and where such practice must be prohibited in public interest. The audit further observed that the university authorities failed to produce documents showing that these four mandatory conditions were verified before sanctioning the allowance to the staff.

The audit also pointed out that approval from the Ministry of Finance is required before granting such allowance, but the university authorities did not produce any order from the ministry for verification during the audit. In the absence of such approval, the disbursement of the allowance was termed irregular.

Records show that the then Registrar of the university issued an order dated May 31, 2019 stating that the 87th Board of Management had approved the proposal to sanction NPA to the teaching staff. It was also stated that the then Vice-Chancellor had written to the Principal Secretary, Ministry of Animal Husbandry and Fisheries, on March 18, 2020 seeking extension of the NPA as per the recommendations of the Seventh Pay Commission. However, the letter written in March reportedly did not carry a serial number, raising doubts about its authenticity.

K Venkata Reddy, retired professor of Poultry Science and former member of the Board of Management, denied that the matter was ever discussed in the 87th meeting. He said he had attended all meetings during his tenure and maintained that the letters issued by the Vice-Chancellor and the Registrar were not genuine. He has demanded a thorough probe into the alleged illegal disbursement of the allowance.

When contacted, KL Suresh, the then Comptroller, said he acted on instructions from higher authorities and was unsure whether the issue had been discussed in the Board meeting. Former Registrar HRV Reddy, however, maintained that the decision was taken as per the resolution of the Board of Management. Former Vice-Chancellor Dr HD Narayanaswamy was unavailable for comment.

Hippo attacks, kills vet in zoo

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B'luru-based doctor was undergoing training at Shivamogga zoo

A 27-year-old veterinarian lost her life after being attacked by a hippopotamus at the Shivamogga Zoo and Safari in Tyavarekoppa. The deceased, Dr Samiksha Reddy, a Bengaluru-based veterinary doctor, had recently been appointed on a contract basis and was undergoing training at the facility.

According to officials, the incident occurred late on Thursday night. At around 10.30 pm, she went to the zoo hospital to treat a bird. Later, at approximately 11.45 pm, she entered the enclosure of a pregnant hippopotamus to check its body temperature using a thermal camera. The animal suddenly turned aggressive and attacked her. She sustained severe injuries and was immediately shifted to a private hospital in Shivamogga, where she underwent surgery. However, she succumbed to her injuries early on Friday morning, at around 6.30 am.

Forest, Ecology and Environment Minister Eshwar B Khandre expressed deep grief over the incident, calling it a tragic loss. He stated that the government stands with the bereaved family during this difficult time and prayed for strength for them to cope with the loss. The minister has directed officials to provide compensation to the family as per norms. He also stressed that all veterinarians working in zoos across the state must strictly follow standard operating procedures while treating wildlife. Further, he has ordered an inquiry into the incident by a team comprising senior veterinarians and forest officials, with instructions to submit a report within seven days.

—BMB

No signal for '5' series

Telecom ministry dismisses '5' series rumours, highlights utilisation norms and allocation thresholds for operators

Minister of State for Communications, Pemmasani Chandra Sekhar, has clarified that there is no proposal to introduce a new mobile number series starting with '5'. He said numbering resources are allocated to telecom operators based on the utilisation of existing Mobile Switching Centre (MSC) codes, with fresh allocations made only after operators meet prescribed usage thresholds.

As per the norms, operators must achieve a minimum utilisation of allocated numbers before seeking more. This ranges from 40% utilisation for allocations below 3 million numbers, gradually increasing to 70% for allocations above 25 million. Intermediate slabs include 45% (3–6 million), 50% (6–8 million), 55% (8–9 million), 60% (9–10 million), 63% (10–15 million), 66% (15–20 million), and 68% (20–25 million). The government also maintains a common pool of numbers, reclaiming unused resources when licences are surrendered and reallocating them based on demand. The 1600 series has been reserved for service and transactional calls, while the National Numbering Plan is currently under review, based on recommendations by the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India.

—BMB

Government of India

Ministry of Rural Development

National Rural Infrastructure Development Agency

5th Floor, 15-NBCC Tower, Bhikaji Cama Place

New Delhi -110066

Advt. No. 01/2026

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Assistant Director (F&A)

CBC 35104/11/0005/2526

West Asia conflict: Six Indians lost their lives in 'various incidents', says MEA

Amid the escalating West Asia conflict, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on Friday said six Indian nationals have lost their lives while one remains missing in "various incidents".

At an inter-ministerial briefing here, Additional Secretary (Gulf), MEA, Aseem R Mahajan, also said, "Late yesterday night, we received information regarding the tragic demise of an Indian national, during an attack in Riyadh on March 18." He, however, did not elaborate upon the circumstances of this death.

"We express our deepest condolences to the family of the deceased. Our Mission in Riyadh is in touch with the family and closely coordinating with local authorities for the early return of the mortal remains to India," he said.

On Friday, the Indian Embassy in Riyadh also said that an Indian national was killed in Saudi Arabia due to the "recent events of March 18". In a social media post, the Indian Mission expressed its "deepest condolences on the tragic demise of an Indian national in Riyadh due to recent events on March 18".

A day earlier, the Indian embassy said alerts were received by residents in Riyadh and some other regions on Wednesday. "The Indian community is advised to remain calm and composed," the embassy said.

Mahajan also told reporters in Delhi that "six Indian nationals have lost their lives and one is missing in various incidents".

"Our missions in Saudi Arabia, Oman, Iraq, and the UAE are in regular touch with the concerned authorities regarding the missing Indian national and for the early repatriation of mortal remains of the deceased Indian nationals to India," he said.

Less than a week ago, the MEA official had told reporters in an inter-ministerial briefing on the West Asia situation that five Indian nationals had lost their lives while one is missing in "various incidents".

The West Asia conflict began on February 28 when the US-Israel combine launched military strikes on Iran. In retaliation, Tehran has targeted Gulf countries hosting US military bases.

Energy and other civilian infrastructure in the Gulf region have also come under attack during this conflict that has stretched into three weeks, with no end to it in sight.

Since February 28, around three lakh passengers have returned from the region to India, Mahajan said.

MEA Spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday spoke to leaders of Oman, Malaysia, France, Jordan and Qatar.

"In these conversations, the prime minister put forth India's position on the ongoing conflict in West Asia. He highlighted the need to prioritise dialogue and diplomacy, for de-escalation and the subsequent restoration of peace and stability," he said.

The prime minister strongly condemned the attack on energy infrastructure. The PM and the various leaders reiterated their support for safe and free navigation through the Strait of Hormuz, he told reporters.

Prime Minister Modi spoke with the Sultan of Oman, and conveyed Eid greetings in advance to him and the people of Oman.

The PM "reiterated India's condemnation of violation of Oman's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and appreciated Oman's efforts in facilitating safe return of Indian nationals," the MEA spokesperson said.

Prime Minister Modi also spoke to French President Emmanuel Macron. "They agreed to continue close coordination to advance peace and stability in the region and beyond," Jaiswal said.

Sharing an update on the return of Indian nationals from the conflict-hit region, he said many Indians who were stranded in Israel earlier during this conflict have been taking the Jordan route to come back to India.

Also, a total of 913 Indian nationals have crossed the Iranian borders with Armenia and Azerbaijan, and have started to gradually return to India via the two countries, he said. And 284 pilgrims from India who had earlier gone to Iran, have all come back to the country, the MEA said.

"Yesterday 10 calls and six emails were received at the Control Room, largely calls about merchant ships," he said. —PTI

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Rumble at the Roerich and Devika Rani Estate

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

"There is high dispersal of big cats, mostly leopards, in villages located at forest fringes. Elephants more often than not venture out of forest areas due to various reasons, including lack of maintenance of elephant-proof trenches, solar tentacles, etc. While the department has a robust system for aggrieved individuals to apply for ex-gratia in case of any human-wildlife conflict incidents, this cannot be the solution. The number of such incidents should be brought down," said a wildlife activist.

Conservationists say the Rs 99.2-crore ecotourism and cultural hub project at Roerich and Devika Rani Estate by the Karnataka Tourism Department will only aggravate the human-wildlife conflict situation in the region.

They underline that the elephant overpass on NH-209 near Roerich and Devika Rani Estate has been witnessing animal movement, and any development in the area will only lead to a surge in the number of conflict cases.

"We went for plants at the overpass that attract elephants. The idea was to make the overpass useful for wildlife. Now, a considerable wildlife movement is observed on the overpass. While the Tourism department says that the proposed project will not harm wildlife, any development in such proximity to an area frequented by wildlife will lead to a surge in conflict cases," said Niveditha Sunkad, trustee, RR Nagar - I CARE.

Notably, the Karnataka Forest Department has been paying large sums in ex-gratia for damages caused by wild animals in areas adjacent to Roerich and Devika Rani Estate. Between June and December 2022, two conflict cases led to payment of Rs 31,750 as ex-gratia, followed by Rs 1.06 lakh in 2023, more than Rs 27,000 in 2024, and nearly Rs 80,000 in the first two months of 2025.

Husband must participate in household chores: SC

The Supreme Court on Friday said a husband has to equally participate in household chores like cooking, cleaning and washing as he is not marrying a maid but a life partner.

The observations came from a bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta which was hearing a petition filed by a man challenging an order of the Karnataka High Court.

The high court had set aside a trial court order granting divorce to the man on the ground of cruelty.

During the hearing before the apex court, the counsel appearing for the man said the mediation between the parties had failed. He said the marriage between the parties took place in May 2017 and since 2019, the couple is separated.

"I (man) want a divorce. The trial court granted a divorce on the ground of cruelty," the counsel said.

"You have to equally participate in all these. Cooking, cleaning, washing, everything. Today's times are different," Justice Nath observed, adding the high court was right that it might not be a ground for cruelty.

"You are not marrying a maid. You are marrying a life partner," Justice Mehta observed. **PTI**

Use of darknet, cryptocurrencies noted

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

officials, investigations into multiple narcotics cases in the city have revealed a pattern involving certain foreign nationals, who initially enter India on valid student or tourist visas, later become involved in illegal drug trade activities. A senior police official said that some of these individuals establish connections with local networks and participate in the distribution of narcotic substances across different parts of the city targeting large student populations and among where the demand for recreational drugs is relatively higher.

The official further explained that foreign nationals commonly arrive in India on tourist, business, student, or medical visas. "However, in several instances, they continue to remain in the country even after the validity of their visas expires. Investigations have uncovered numerous cases where foreigners have overstayed beyond their permitted duration of stay," he said.

Officials said that instead of returning to their home countries after their visas lapse, some individuals allegedly attempt to avoid detection by discarding their passports or visa documents in an effort to conceal their identities and remain in the country illegally.

Police also pointed out that in earlier cases, several foreign nationals, who had entered India legally were later found to be involved in drug-related offences.

After being apprehended, criminal cases were registered and they were required to remain in India until the completion of legal proceedings. During this period, police said that a few of the accused were allegedly found continuing their involvement in drug peddling activities.

Officials explained that since the accused are required to be present during court trials, they often remain in the country for extended periods, which sometimes results in delays in the deportation process.

Addressing the issue, the Commissioner stated that the government had recognised the problem and introduced amendments to existing laws to deal with such situations.

"When the government understood the issue, the law was amended accordingly. If any foreign national is found involved in drug peddling or overstaying without a valid visa, authorities seek court permission to expedite the deportation of such offenders and hand them over to Foreign Registrations Office (FRO) to hold them at detention centers until legal proceedings are cleared, after which they are deported," the Commissioner said.

Investigations have also revealed that in some cases, student visas were allegedly used as a cover by certain individuals who acted as drug couriers, particularly dealing in high-value narcotics such as cocaine. When caught, they are booked under various sections of the NDPS Act.

Police officials said efforts are underway to identify foreign nationals residing illegally in the country and initiate deportation procedures through the FRO. Law enforcement agencies are also closely monitoring the supply routes through which narcotic substances, including marijuana, are transported into the city.

In addition, investigations have uncovered the use of darknet platforms and cryptocurrencies such as Bitcoin for the procurement and distribution of drugs. Police have initiated legal action against such networks, including those operating from overseas. Police have also busted a network that allegedly supplied narcotics to the city using postal and courier services.

In cases involving drug sale and consumption, police are gathering detailed information about the sources supplying narcotics to foreign nationals. Based on these findings, authorities are taking legal action by arresting those involved and confiscating their passports as part of the investigation process.

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I Varun Srivastava R/o C-1704, Ncc Nagarjuna Aster Park, Yelahanka New Town,Gkvk Post,B'luru-560065 have changed my minor daughter's name from Vanshika to Vanshika Srivastava for all purposes.

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I, Kirtik Soni, born on 22nd March 2002, s/o Chandra prakash R/o 170,Shri Krishna Nilaya, flat 103,1st floor,JR layout, 1st Main road, Haralur, Bengaluru 560102 I have changed my name from Kirtik Chandraprakash to Kirtik Soni for all purposes vide sworn before notary B.M Chandra shekhar, Bangalore dated 19.03.2026

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TAKE CARE OF YOUR KIDNEYS

I'm a kidney surgeon. Here's why I hope I never see you

As a urological surgeon, I meet many patients with chronic (long-term) kidney disease.

Sometimes, I see patients that have progressed to the point where their kidneys do not work at all. This leads to the toxic build-up of waste products, meaning they need regular dialysis or a kidney transplant.

While these treatments are lifesaving, access to them is becoming increasingly challenging.

As more people are newly diagnosed with chronic kidney disease, the larger the demand for dialysis. By 2032, it is expected dialysis rates in Australia will surge by almost 86% compared with rates in 2022.

Many dialysis units across the country have more patients than they can treat. Some patients wait on average two to three years for a kidney transplant.

So my colleagues and I are increasingly working in a health-care system at capacity caring for people with kidney disease.

Clearly, it would be better for patients and the health system if we detected kidney disease early and treated it before it progressed.

Kidney Health Australia's action plan provides a practical blueprint of how to get there.

The cost of kidney disease

An estimated one in seven Australian adults have indicators of chronic kidney disease, the vast majority not knowing it.

About three out of four Australian adults have at least one factor that increases their risk of chronic kidney disease. This includes diabetes or high blood pressure.

Chronic kidney disease is associated with a higher risk of heart attack, stroke and premature death.

It also has a significant public health impact, costing Australia A$9.9 billion a year.

Remind me, what do your kidneys actually do?

The kidneys are two fist-sized organs that sit at the back of the abdomen and perform some of the body's most essential tasks.

They are best known to filter waste and excess fluid from the bloodstream to produce urine.

They produce hormones that help support red blood cell production and bone health. They also regulate blood pressure by maintaining the balance of salts and minerals in the body.

But kidney disease can start and progress for a variety of reasons.

For instance, high blood glucose (sugar) levels and high blood pressure can damage kidney blood vessels and nephrons (filtering units). This affects the kidneys' ability to filter blood.

Kidney disease is often 'silent'

Kidney disease is often described as "silent". That's because kidneys can lose up to 90% of their function before development of symptoms including:

- fatigue
- swelling in the legs and ankles
- persistent high blood pressure
- shortness of breath
- needing to urinate more often, especially at night
- foamy urine.

Unfortunately, kidney damage is often irreversible by this stage. So we need to focus on preventing kidney damage in the first place.

What you can do now

Not all causes of chronic kidney disease are easily preventable. However, there are ways to reduce the chance of kidney disease:

Check in with your GP to make sure you are

- controlling your blood pressure
- managing your diabetes well
- maintaining a healthy weight
- eating a healthy diet with minimal salt intake
- not smoking
- exercising regularly
- drinking enough water
- avoiding excessive use, over long periods, of NSAIDs (non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs), such as ibuprofen.

How do we catch kidney disease early?

Kidney Health Australia proposes GPs perform a "kidney health check" on people at higher risk every one to two years. This would include:

- people with diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, or who are obese
- people who smoke or vape (or who have done so in the past)
- people with a family history of kidney disease
- those aged over 60.

This check would include a blood pressure reading, blood test for kidney function and urine test checking protein levels.

It has been estimated early detection and treatment of kidney disease could prevent more than 38,000 premature deaths, generate 165,000 extra years of healthy life, and deliver a saving of $45 for every $1 invested over the next 20 years.

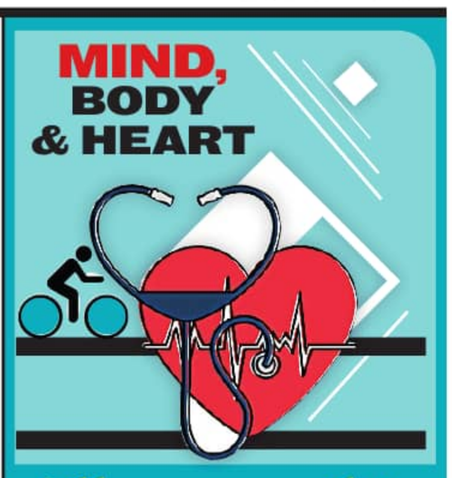
The best dialysis is the one you never need

By the time many patients reach specialists like me, the damage to their kidneys is advanced and irreversible.

Many causes of kidney disease, however, such as high blood pressure and diabetes are largely preventable.

Greater awareness of how to look after your kidneys, simple screening and early intervention could stop many Australians progressing to kidney failure.

(By Anthony Dat, Monash University, The Conversation)



All you need to know about...

Toxic friendship traits

Emotional drain
A platonic soulmate is someone who once felt like your safe space, someone you could turn to without hesitation. But when the friendship starts feeling emotionally exhausting rather than comforting, it's a major red flag. You may find yourself feeling drained after every conversation, as if you're always the one listening and supporting without receiving the same care in return.

Subtle jealousy
In a true platonic soulmate bond, your wins are celebrated wholeheartedly. However, when toxicity creeps in, you may begin to notice subtle signs of jealousy. Instead of being happy for your achievements, your friend might downplay your success, make passive-aggressive comments or shift the focus back to themselves. These small reactions can slowly create tension and self-doubt, making you hesitant to share good news.

Communication turns into criticism
Healthy friendships thrive on open, kind and respectful communication. But when a platonic soulmate friendship turns toxic, conversations often become filled with criticism rather than understanding. You may feel like everything you do is being judged or corrected, even when you're just being yourself.
Instead of constructive feedback, the tone may feel harsh, dismissive or unnecessarily negative. Over time, this can chip away at your confidence.

Boundaries ignored
Boundaries are essential in any relationship, including deep friendships. When a platonic soulmate connection becomes toxic, your personal limits may start to be overlooked. Your friend might expect constant availability, disregard your need for space or make you feel guilty for prioritising yourself.
This lack of respect can make you feel trapped or obligated rather than valued. **—Femina**

MIRRORLIGHTS

Responses of brain's memory centre to prolonged pain influence depression: Study

Changes to one's hippocampus, the brain's memory centre, in response to prolonged pain could be an important factor for why some people develop depression in chronic pain, while others do not, according to a study.

"Our findings suggest that the hippocampus acts as a control centre that helps the brain regulate emotional responses to long-term pain. Depression is not inevitable -- it depends on how this system responds over time," co-lead author Jianfeng Feng, professor of computer science at the UK's University of Warwick, said.

The study, published in the journal Science, analysed brain scans from population cohorts, including data from the UK Biobank, and a rodent model.

People living with chronic pain but without depression tended to show a slightly larger volume of and an increased activity in the hippocampus.

The changes were accompanied by an improved performance in learning and memory tasks, suggesting that the brain may initially mount a compensatory response to persistent pain, the researchers said.

However, individuals experiencing both chronic pain and depression showed a reduced volume of the hippocampus, disrupted activity, and poorer cognitive performance. Analyses of data collected over long-term indicated that the changes developed progressively over time.

"The fact that these changes emerge gradually suggests they are driven by the experience of prolonged pain itself. This isn't simply a pre-existing vulnerability; it's something the brain is doing in response to ongoing pain," Feng said.

The authors wrote, "Integrating human neuroimaging from the UK Biobank with a rodent model, we uncovered biphasic hippocampal remodelling."

"Hippocampal volume increased during early pain stages, with paradoxical cognitive improvements, but declined with comorbid depression," they said.

—PTI

 # Wedding buzz returns
Zendaya rewears 2015 Vivienne Westwood gown, sparks Tom Holland wedding rumours with rings

10 YEARS OF KAPOOR & SONS

Sidharth Malhotra revisits the film that redefined the modern Indian family

On March 18, 2026, Shakun Batra's film on dysfunctional family dynamics, Kapoor & Sons, officially marks its 10th anniversary. The film, which redefined the "modern Indian family" for a generation, continues to be a streaming favourite. For lead actor Sidharth Malhotra, however, the connection began the moment he turned the final page of the script a decade ago. As he celebrates this milestone, Sidharth is also navigating a beautiful new chapter in his personal life as a first-time father.

Sidharth Malhotra on the Kapoor & Sons script

Marking 10 years since the film's release, Sidharth revealed that reading the script left him in tears. In an interview with Hindustan Times, he shared, "When I first read the script, I remember finishing it with tears in my eyes. It felt so real, like stepping into a warm, chaotic Punjabi family where every character had a heartbeat. Playing Arjun was special because he was layered, vulnerable, and carrying so much inside him. Ten years later, people still talk about the film, the scenes, and the family dynamics, as though they have lived with these characters themselves. That kind of love is rare, and I feel grateful we got to bring that story to life."

Kapoor & Sons story summary

In Kapoor & Sons, two brothers from a turbulent home reunite in Coonoor after their grandfather's heart attack to be with their parents. Their bond fractures when Arjun (Sidharth Malhotra) accuses Rahul (Fawad Khan) of plagiarising his story for a bestselling book. The film brought Alia Bhatt and Sidharth Malhotra together on screen for the second time, following their 2012 debut Student of the Year.

Sidharth Malhotra's upcoming projects

On the professional front, Sidharth last appeared alongside Janhvi Kapoor in a film released last year. He is now shooting for the upcoming Vann, which also stars Tamannaah Bhatia.

Sidharth Malhotra's family update

Apart from films, the actor is enjoying this new phase of his personal life. Sidharth and his wife, Kiara Advani, recently welcomed their first child, a daughter named Saraayah. They met in 2018 at a film party but grew close on the sets of Shershaah in 2021. Their on-screen chemistry sparked rumours, but they kept their relationship private for years. In early 2023, Kiara made it official with a playful birthday post for him. **— Etimes**

Story behind the sparkle

Sobhita Dhulipala's bridal look for her wedding to Naga Chaitanya carried a deeper story, rooted in a promise she made years earlier on the sets of Ponniyin Selvan.

Jewellery designer Pratiksha Prashant revealed that Sobhita had already decided back then that she would wear her designs on her wedding day. "She was very clear… she told me she would wear my jewellery when she got married," Pratiksha shared, adding that the choice reflected personal meaning, not just aesthetics. She also praised Sobhita's distinct sense of style and refined taste.

The designer praised Aishwarya Rai Bachchan's meticulousness, noting her focus on every detail. She recalled the actress avoiding six to seven hours of sitting to prevent creasing an organza dupatta, highlighting her discipline and professionalism.

—Etimes

Turning concern into purpose

Priyanka Chopra, currently shooting her next film Varanasi, recently took time out to promote diabetes awareness in India. In an interview, she spoke about her personal journey after marrying Nick Jonas, who lives with Type 1 diabetes.

Featured on a National Geographic list of celebrities using their platforms for awareness, Chopra highlighted India's high diabetes burden but low awareness levels. Reflecting on her early days of understanding the condition, she admitted to feeling anxious, recalling how she would wake up at night to check if Nick was breathing.

Emphasising the importance of awareness and early diagnosis, she said people should not fear the condition, adding that it is manageable and individuals can live and thrive with it. Chopra has also been associated with a non-profit co-founded by her husband, which has conducted awareness campaigns in India and reached global platforms, including the United Nations General Assembly.

Alongside her advocacy, Chopra remains active professionally. She recently released her debut Hollywood production The Bluff and made several appearances during awards season. Up next, she resumes shooting Varanasi, directed by SS Rajamouli, which is reportedly set for a 2027 release. **— Etimes**

SANDALWOOD SHOTS

Y MAHESWARA REDDY

Megoti's spooky comeback

Director Sanjeev Megoti, known for Kannada films Anu, Dhandu, and Aaptha, is making a comeback after a decade with Police Complaint. Actress Prema unveiled the teaser, while Kannada Film Directors' Association president NRK Vishwanath released the first song.

Megoti said the film is a horror-thriller based on the idea that karma returns. Shot in Kannada and Telugu, it features over 50 actors and will be released simultaneously in both languages.

Ragini Dwivedi called the film a unique addition to her career, highlighting the emotional bond between a mother and daughter, along with action and horror elements. She expressed confidence that audiences would support it in theatres.

Krishna Sai, who has acted in Telugu films, makes his Sandalwood debut with this project and praised the script and his role.

The film also stars Varalakshmi Sharathkumar, Naveen Chandra, Ravishankar, Sharath Lohitashwa, and others.

Artist turns filmmaker

Sandalwood continues to attract people from all walks of life, and makeup artist Devaraj Kumar is the latest to chase his filmmaking dream again. Despite past setbacks, he has acted in, directed, and backed the Kannada film Ayudha, set for release on March 27.

Kumar, a makeup artist for over two decades, earlier played lead roles in Danger Zone and Taj Mahal 2. The latter failed at the box office, causing financial loss and pushing him into depression. He had decided not to back films again but chose to return with Ayudha, investing his earnings into the project.

The film, shot over two years, is now ready for release. It features four songs composed by Steven Satish, Manadeep, and Manju, with cinematography by Venus Murthy.

The cast includes Samhita Vinya, Surya Praveen, Raghuraj Malnad, Suneel Birur, and Narayan.

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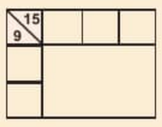
SOLVE IT IN A MINUTE

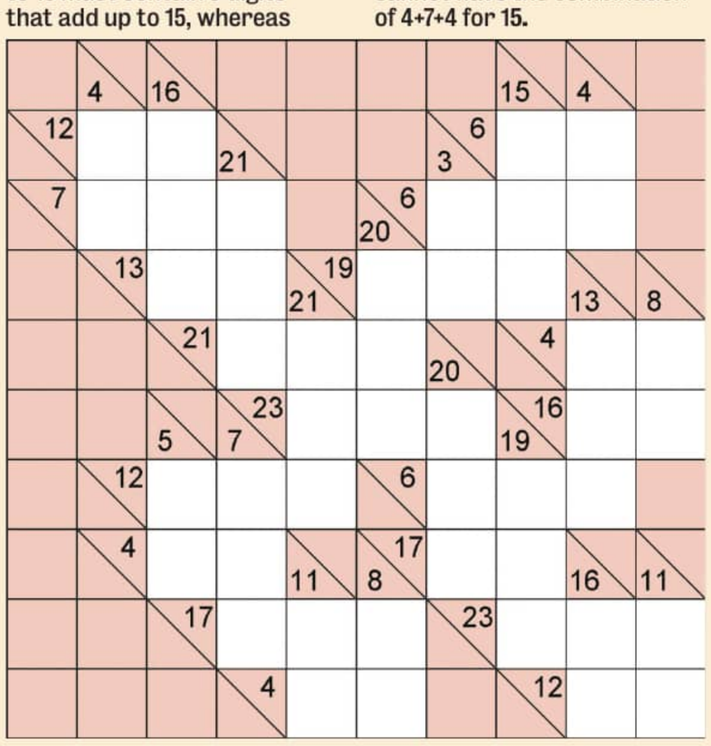
$\sqrt[4]{[(2^{65}+2^{67})/10]} = ?$

Kakuro

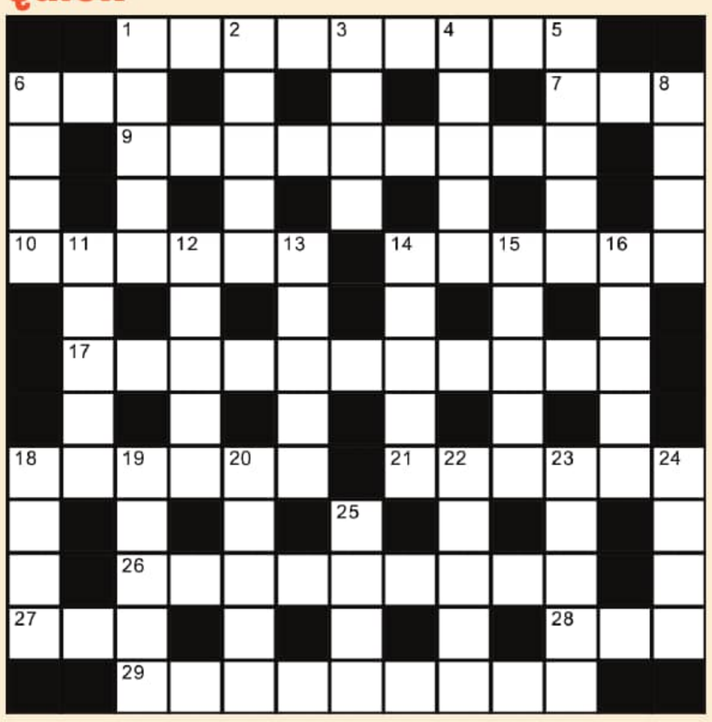
The numbers in the grey squares refer to the sums of the digits that you must fill into the empty spaces directly below or to the right of the grey square containing the number. For instance, in the given example, the 3 boxes horizontally next to 15 must contain 3 digits that add up to 15, whereas for 9, it is the 2 boxes placed vertically under it that must add up to 9. No zeros are used here, only the digits 1 through 9.



Note: A digit cannot appear more than once in any particular digit combination. For instance, in the example, we cannot have the combination of 4+7+4 for 15.



Quick



ACROSS

1 Road that is also known as Sampangi Ramaswamy Temple Road (9)
6 Dove-call (3)
7 First sale of a stock (3)
9 Giving a heavy resounding blow (9)
10 Tedious (6)
14 Declared (6)
17 Stray articles; remnants? (4,3,4)
18 Cajoled or beguiled (6)
21 Fashions (6)
26 Shortens by cutting (9)
27 Golfer's score (3)
28 Light knock (3)
29 An __ _ __ : it keeps doctor away? (5,1,3)

DOWN

1 Cringe (5)
2 Oppenheimer director Christopher ___ (5)
3 Much-admired figure (4)
4 Armed robbery (5)
5 Power (5)
6 Putter or driver (4)
8 Was in debt (4)
11 Convex moulding (5)
12 Book reference (5)
13 Fine and splendid (5)
14 Take ___ : be partial? (5)
15 Irritate (5)
16 Come after (5)
18 Certain cut of meat (4)
19 Bone cavities–"at ran" anagram? (5)
20 Fit out (5)
22 Carried or lugged by hand (5)
23 Robust (5)
24 Store (4)
25 Dull pain (4)

Quoteuncode

This puzzle is a substitution cipher in which one letter stands for another. If you think that Q equals C, it will equal C throughout the puzzle. Single letters, short words and words using an apostrophe give you clues to locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error.

Today's CLUE: L EQUALS Y

SW LPC BUBIKPI ZQD RXDMDIZ HPHDIZ, LPC TBIIPZ ASJD ZQD HPHDIZM PW LPCX KBSAL ASWD KDDRAL.

Linemaro

I know what you will be for Halloween. Mine

Mindchow

Television knows no night. It is perpetual day. TV embodies our fear of the dark, of night, of the other side of things

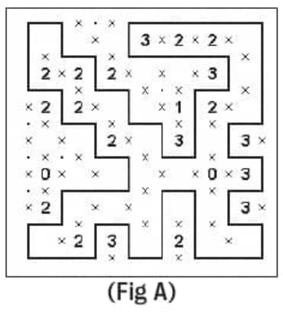
Joke of the day

Creditor: A man with a better memory than a debtor

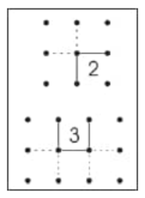
Loop

Rules

» Connect adjacent dots with vertical or horizontal lines, creating a single loop (Fig A). » Crossovers or branches are not allowed (As shown by dotted lines in Fig B). » Numbers in the puzzle indicate the number of lines that should surround it, while empty cells may be surrounded by any number of lines. » You can't draw lines around zeros. » Each puzzle has just one unique solution.



(Fig A)

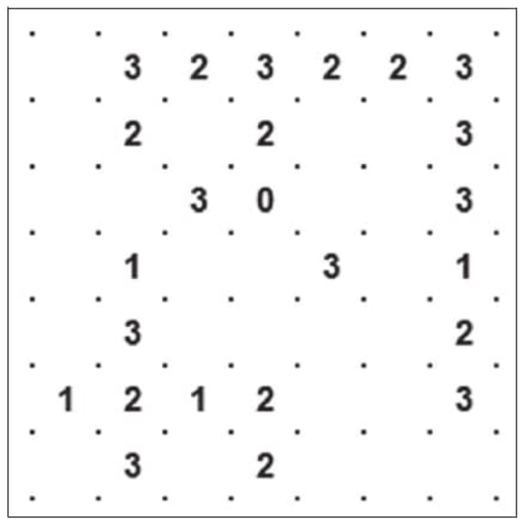


(Fig B) Not Allowed

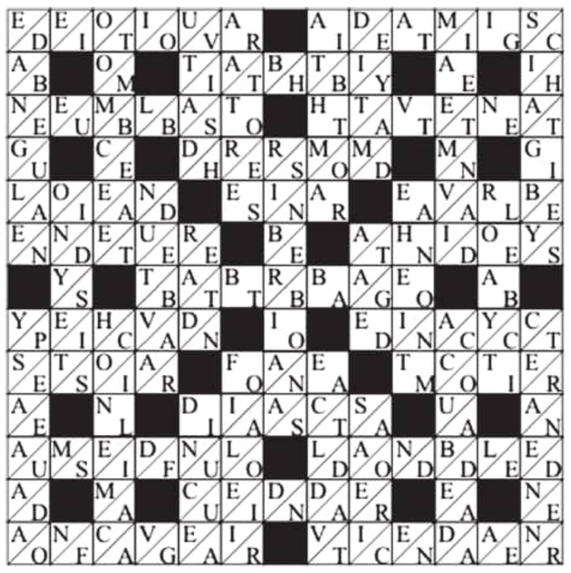
How to begin:

Example (Fig A) – Begin with the zero next to 3. Since no lines can be drawn around zero, mark crosses around it, as shown. Now there is a cross in one space around 3. So we know the three lines of 3 can only be drawn in the remaining three spaces. Next, these lines can only be extended in one direction each. Continue, using the same logic.

Hints: Keep eliminating possibilities by marking crosses in spaces between dots where a line isn't possible, i.e., if you have already completed required lines or where a line extension may create a branch or cause a dead-end (Fig B)



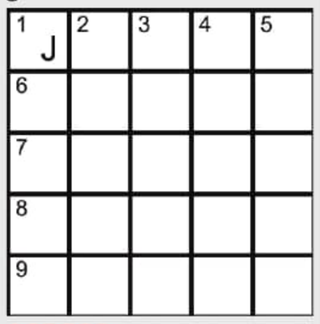
Strikeout



This crossword has no clues and the answer is there waiting for you. All you have to do is find it in each square. You have a choice of two letters, one of which you must strike out. If you choose correctly, you will be left with a grid that contains real words.

Fast five

How long do you think it will take you to unscramble the ten words shown below and fit them correctly into the grid in the order given one letter has already been entered to get you started? on your marks, get set...



ACROSS

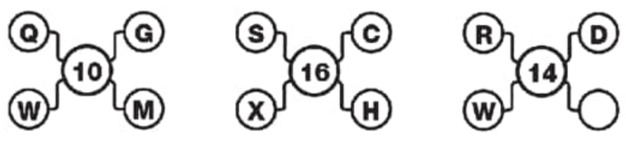
1 As a VJ; 6 Am Aga; 7 Swale; 8 Vanes; 9 Tenty

DOWN

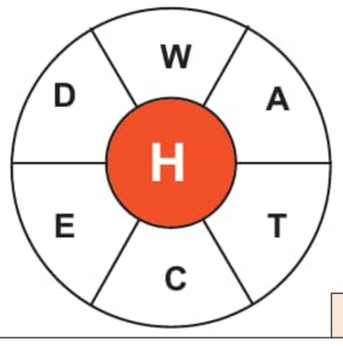
1 An jaw; 2 Ave Ga; 3 At lev; 4 Meant; 5 Says S

Mensapuzzle

Which letter replaces the blank and completes the sequence?



Bull's eye



How many words of four or more letters can you make from the letters shown? Every word must contain the central letter. There should be one seven-letter word. British English Dictionary is used as a reference.

17 Average; 19 Good; 21 Outstanding

SudokuChallenge

	3	6			8			
5					7	1		3
			6					9
	7					9	2	
	4		9		1		7	
	2	1					8	
7					9			
8		3	7					4
			5			6	3	

To solve a Sudoku puzzle, every digit from one to nine must appear in each of the nine vertical columns, in each of the nine horizontal rows and in each of the nine boxes.

Gofigure

Place the four numbers in the first, third, fifth, and seventh boxes and whatever operators you care to use in the second, fourth, and sixth boxes in the correct order to get the answer. Use the numbers only once.

Easy

☐☐☐☐☐☐☐ = 9

2 9 5 3

Medium

☐☐☐☐☐☐☐ = 12

3 5 8 2

Hard

☐☐☐☐☐☐☐ = 35

2 5 7 8

Hocusfocus

Find at least six differences in details between panels.

Differences: 1. Arm is longer. 2. Box of cards is moved. 3. Hair is longer. 4. Back of chair is shorter. 5. One side of coat collar is missing. 6. Exclamation point is added to sign.

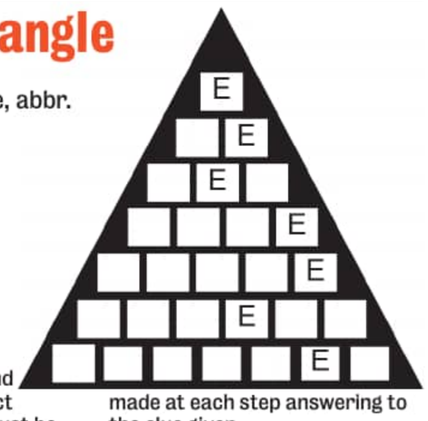
Riddler

Feed, good, and kiss are 3 examples of words with double letters. Use the clues and fill in the blanks to find words with consecutive double letters.

1. A woodwind instrument B _ _ _ _ _ N
2. A sweet treat that T _ _ _ _ E
3. Like some boats and ships. K _ _ _ _ _ _ S

Alpha triangle

1 Second vowel
2 Physical Exercise, abbr.
3 Shade of green
4 Blanch
5 Mac maker
6 Entreaty
7 Clothes

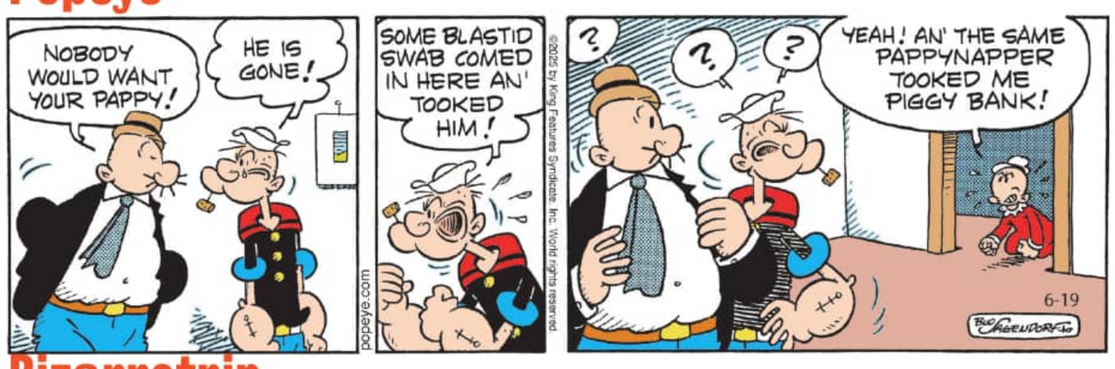


Beginning at the top move towards the bottom seven-letter word by adding a letter at each step and rearranging. A correct and different word must be made at each step answering to the clue given.

DIFFICULT TO SOLVE? FIND THESE SOLUTIONS ON THE NEXT PAGE »

COMICS

Popeye


NOBODY WOULD WANT YOUR PAPPY!
HE IS GONE!
SOME BLASTID SWAB COMED IN HERE AN' TOOKED HIM!
YEAH! AN' THE SAME PAPPYNAPPER TOOKED ME PIGGY BANK!
popeye.com
6-19

Bizarrotrip

Diamond Lil

Hart of the city

WHAT A GREAT SERVICE YOU'RE OFFERING! HOW MUCH?
WHATEVER YOU CAN SPARE!
I'VE GOT A FIVE... AND ABOUT TEN DOLLARS IN DIMES.
HMM... WE'LL TAKE THE FIVE AND PASS ON TH--
WAIT!
JUST PUT THE DIMES IN MY HAT!
HEART OF THE CITY © 2022 ANDREWS MCMEEL
GOCOMICS.COM/HEARTOFTHECITY
12/11

Crankshaft

I THOUGHT YOU ONLY APPEARED AT HALLOWEEN...
UP UNTIL NOW...
BUT I'VE DECIDED TO EXPAND MY BRAND.
THE VILLAGE BOOKSMITH
THINK OF IT AS A SANTA SIDE HUSTLE!
PIZZA
© 2025 Mediagraphics, Inc. Dist. by Andrews McMeel Syndication
BATIUK & DAVIS tombatiuk.com/books
12-9

Mutts

WRITTEN IN THE STARS

DR SUNDEEP KOCHAR

If it's your birthday today

You radiate confidence and vitality today. Love feels passionate and affirming. Career momentum builds as leadership qualities shine. Financial prospects improve through decisive action. Travel fuels independence and excitement. At home, you feel energized and inspired. Embracing your individuality allows you to move forward boldly, setting intentions that align with both ambition and happiness.

Aries Mar 21 – Apr 20
Something needs saying, even if words feel awkward. Speak up anyway, because silence implies acceptance. Others will assume you're content unless you clearly express what's actually bothering you.

Taurus Apr 21 – May 20
Despite appearing confident, you worry about keeping a recent promise. Even if failure is possible, effort matters. Try your best, because avoiding the attempt guarantees disappointment for everyone involved.

Gemini May 21 – Jun 21
Avoid publicly supporting a colleague today. Aligning with them could backfire when faults emerge. Stay neutral at work, protect your interests, and remember loyalty to yourself matters most right now.

Cancer Jun 22 – July 23
If someone blames you unfairly, defend yourself clearly. Accept responsibility only for misplaced trust, learn from it, and avoid relying on them again in similar situations.

Leo Jul 24 – Aug 23
A long-held belief faces challenge today. Evidence may be uncomfortable, but accepting it brings growth. Everyone misjudges sometimes, and acknowledging that doesn't diminish your strength or confidence.

Virgo Aug 24 – Sep 23
Attention to detail serves you well today. Scrutinize agreements carefully, question inconsistencies, and walk away if explanations don't satisfy. Walking away now prevents costly complications later.

Libra Sep 24 – Oct 22
You want to say something meaningful, but hesitation persists. Consider whether silence serves better. Not every thought requires expression, and restraint can sometimes protect harmony and peace.

Scorpio Oct 23 – Nov 22
Working with someone you dislike is manageable professionally. Complete the task efficiently, then create distance. Cooperation doesn't require friendship, and separation afterward preserves your peace.

Sagittarius Nov 23 – Dec 22
Pushing past limits now risks lasting consequences. Pace yourself carefully and avoid commitments you can't fully guarantee. Anything less than certainty creates problems you don't need.

Capricorn Dec 23 – Jan 20
Your encouragement could lift someone's spirits significantly. Offer kindness, reassurance, and perspective, reminding them optimism matters when facing difficulties and that resilience begins with attitude.

Aquarius Jan 21 – Feb 19
Brooding magnifies worries. Identify the issue clearly, then act decisively to fix it. You possess more influence and capability than you currently acknowledge.

Pisces Feb 20 – Mar 20
Financial situations appear stable, but assumptions are risky. Double-check details, avoid complacency, and don't treat any opportunity as guaranteed until it proves itself over time.

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Drishika, Bengaluru

Harshika, Bengaluru

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SOLUTIONS

SOLVE IN 1M
$= 4\sqrt{[6^5(1+4)/10]}$
$= 4\sqrt{(6^5*2-1)}$
$= 4\sqrt{(6^{5-1})}$
$= 4\sqrt{6^4}$
$= 6^4/4 = 216 = 65536$

BULL'S EYE
ache, ached, chat, cheat, chew, death, detach, each, etch, hate, hated, head, heat, teach, thaw, thawed, watch, WATCHED, what, wheat, whet

QUOTE UNCODE
If you abandon the present moment, you cannot live the moments of your daily life deeply.

FAST FIVE

J	A	V	A	S
A	G	A	M	A
W	A	L	E	S
A	V	E	N	S
N	E	T	T	Y

STRIKE OUT

D	E	T	O	U	R	■	A	D	A	M
G	C	H	E	R	O	■	D	N	I	C
N	U	M	B	A	T	■	H	A	V	E
A	O	T	A	B	B	Y	■	A	R	E
S	E	F	U	L	■	L	A	N	D	E
E	N	■	D	I	S	C	S	■	U	N
S	T	I	R	■	O	N	E	■	T	O
P	E	C	A	N	■	O	■	E	N	A
■	S	■	B	A	B	A	G	■	E	■
E	N	T	E	R	■	B	■	A	N	D
L	O	A	D	■	S	I	R	■	A	R
■	C	■	H	E	R	O	■	D	■	N
N	U	M	B	A	T	■	H	A	V	E
A	O	T	A	B	B	Y	■	A	R	E
D	E	T	O	U	R	■	A	D	A	M

QUICK

■	A	P	P	L	E	■	A	D	A	Y
P	A	R	■	I	■	H	■	E	■	T
H	■	N	■	O	■	A	■	O	■	O
C	O	A	X	E	D	■	S	T	Y	L
■	L	■	E	■	N	■	E	■	O	■
O	D	D	S	A	N	D	E	N	D	S
V	■	N	■	R	■	I	■	N	■	N
B	O	R	I	N	G	■	S	T	A	T
U	■	E	■	A	■	L	■	S	■	H
L	W	A	L	L	O	P	I	N	G	■
C	O	O	■	O	■	D	■	E	■	I
■	C	U	N	N	I	G	H	A	M	■

MENSA PUZZLE
I. Taking the numerical values of the letters in each figure, subtract the right hand numbers from the left hand numbers on the same line to give the central number.

RIDDLER
1. Bassoon, 2. Toffee & 3. Keelless

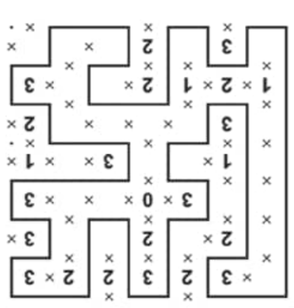
SUDOKU

4	3	6	1	9	8	7	5	2
5	8	9	2	4	7	1	6	3
2	1	7	6	5	3	8	4	9
3	7	5	8	6	4	9	2	1
6	4	8	9	2	1	3	7	5
9	2	1	3	7	5	4	8	6
7	6	2	4	3	9	5	1	8
8	5	3	7	1	6	2	9	4
1	9	4	5	8	2	6	3	7

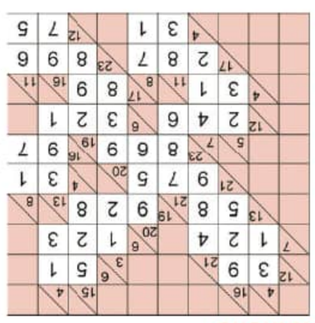
ALPHA TRIANGLE
E, PE, Pea, Pale, Apple, Appeal, Apparel.

GO FIGURE
3 + 9 + 2 − 5 = 9
Easy
8 + 5 − 3 + 2 = 12
Medium
5 x 8 − 7 + 2 = 35
Hard

LOOP



KAKURO



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GREAT EXPECTATIONS

Priya says she expected to get more offers from Bollywood after Raavan, but she wasn't convinced with offers she got

With web shows like The Family Man and The Good Wife, Priya Mani Raj has found a renewed connection with audiences across India. While she has long been a well-known name in the South, the digital space has helped her reach a wider, pan-India audience. Yet, her journey with Hindi cinema began much earlier — with Mani Ratnam's Raavan. When asked if she had high expectations from her Bollywood debut, she says, "Yes, I did. I was brought up watching Hindi films, so when I got an offer to do the Hindi version of Raavan, I was thrilled. I got to act with Abhishek Bachchan and so many wonderful actors like Ravi Kishan and Pankaj Tripathi. I was very happy. I didn't have scenes with Aishwarya, but I met her during promotions, and she was so warm."

She adds, "Honestly, I did think I'd get more offers after that. But I was quite selective. I got some offers that I liked and some I wasn't convinced about, so I just kept them at bay. I wasn't disappointed because I had my plate full with South films anyway."

Opening up about her initial journey, Priya Mani reflects on how she learned the ropes without any guidance. She says, "When I look back at my old pictures or films, I'm like, 'Why was I like this?' But it's a learning process. Nobody is perfect when they start out. Back then, I didn't even know what grooming meant. I was 18 when I started out, and no one in my family was from the industry. I didn't have a godfather to guide me, so I went with my instinct. I still do. I didn't know you could have a personal makeup artist, a hairstylist, or even someone called a stylist," she laughs, adding, "My peers had friends styling for them, and I just figured things out on my own."

—ETimes

How Zendaya prepped for The Drama

Hollywood actress Zendaya has shared that she binge watched all of the 'Twilight' movies after she was cast alongside Robert Pattinson in ''The Drama'.

The 29-year-old actress plays Robert's on-screen love interest in the new romantic black-comedy-drama film, reports 'Female First UK'.

Zendaya has revealed that the project prompted her to watch the Twilight franchise for the first time, describing the movies as a "phenomenon".

Speaking to The Hollywood Reporter, Zendaya shared, "I was like, 'How have I never seen these movies before?' But I felt like I had to, it's like a cultural kind of phenomenon that I hadn't been a part of yet. "I watched all of them in like a day. It was great, I enjoyed myself".

Zendaya relished starring alongside Robert in the

unconventional new romcom. The actress reflected, "These characters are unique. They're very unique people and the circumstance is quite unique and it reveals a lot about love, about what we're willing to do for love, what we're willing to accept, and how much you really know your partner".

As per 'Female First UK', Robert also enjoyed working with Zendaya, and he was impressed that his co-star watched all of the Twilight movies in just two days.

—IANS

Ryan Gosling recalls 'trauma' from 'The Big Short'

Actor Ryan Gosling revealed that his reluctance to wear wigs on screen stems from a past experience during the filming of 'The Big Short', calling it a form of "trauma," according to People.

During an appearance on Late Night With Seth Meyers on March 18, the Oscar-nominated actor spoke about his transformation for his upcoming sci-fi film Project Hail Mary, where he sports long, rugged hair and a bushy beard.

Gosling said he was initially hesitant to adopt the look due to a memorable moment with co-star Steve Carell on the set of The Big Short (2015), according to People.

"I have a little bit of trauma because I went for a bit on this film, The Big Short," he said, recalling how Carell reacted when he first saw him in costume.

"He just stared at me and said, 'Never do this again,'" Gosling added, drawing laughter from the

audience. The actor admitted that such a comment is "the last thing you want" to hear from a co-star before filming begins.

Interestingly, Carell also underwent a transformation for his role in the film, gaining around 25 pounds during the shoot in New Orleans.

Gosling's latest film, Project Hail Mary, which releases on March 20, follows a science teacher sent on a mission to save humanity.

—ANI

Of heart-warming bonds

This film is the second sequel to Love Mocktail that was released in 2020. Though director-cum-actor Darling Krishna made the first sequel - Love Mocktail 2 - in 2022, he took more time - four years - to come out with its second sequel. The delay notwithstanding, Darling Krishna's efforts, not only as an actor but also as a director, are appreciable. Especially the post-intermission parts prove that Darling Krishna has matured not only as an actor but also as a director. Instead of indulging in self-promotion, he gives space to other actors and also follows the script faithfully and ensures other actors follow it religiously.

LOVE MOCKTAIL 3

3.0 RATING ★★★☆☆

- **DIRECTOR** Darling Krishna
- **ACTORS** Darling Krishna, Milana Nagaraj, Baby Samvrutha, Shwetha R Prasad, Dilip Raj, Rajani Bharadwaj
- **CERTIFICATION** U/A
- **Duration** 134 minutes

Though Darling Krishna has taken his time to redefine the core subject in the first half of the movie, he proves his mettle during the second-half by allowing other actors such as Shwetha R Prasad, Dilip Raj, Baby Samvrutha, Rekha Kudligi, and BM Giriraj to showcase their acting skills. The family court scene is particularly gripping. Arguments and counter arguments between Dilip Raj and Shwetha R Prasad (in the roles of an advocate couple) are a treat to watch.

The movie begins with a hallucination scene where Adi (Darling Krishna) and his wife Nidhi (Milana Nagaraj) are sitting at a restaurant. Nidhi criticises a child for not following table manners and asks Abi to share his significant childhood experiences. The next scene is where Vijay (Abhilash Dalapathi) is seen busy arranging a baby shower for his wife Sushma.

Adi's former girlfriends Joshitha (Amrutha Iyengar) and Sihi (Rachel David) ask Vijay about Adi. At this juncture, the director introduces a flashback narrating how Adi adopted Ramya aka Nidhi (Baby Samvrutha) and wanted to bring her up with discipline and how Nidhi becomes a problem for teachers. A lady doctor lodges a complaint with police seeking Nidhi's custody. You have to watch the movie to know what happens to Nidhi and Adi.

All the cast have done a fantastic job. Milana Nagaraj makes a brief appearance in the movie. Abhilash Dalapati has acted well. Baby Samvrutha walks away with all honours for her sterling performance.

Music by Nakul Abhyankar and cinematography by Sri Crazy Mindz add value to the movie.

The movie is worth a watch for family audiences.

—Y Maheswara Reddy